WEEK-DAY RELIGION

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WEEK-DAY RELIGION.

BY THE

REV. J. R. MILLER.

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DEDICATORY.

It may be that this little book will be accepted of the Master and sent by him on a mission of helpfulness to some struggling lives. It is now laid humbly at his feet with this simple hope. Its aim is to help young Christians especially to take the religion of Christ out of closet and sanctuary and creed, and get it into their daily lives of toil, temptation and care. Perhaps none of us get the best that we might get from our relation to Christ. Few of us, if any, live as well as we believe. The moralities that we know, we do not follow. The helps that are put into our hands we do not use when we are climbing the stiff, steep paths or staggering under the burdens of life. The comforts that religion gives do not comfort us in sorrow. Many of us think of Christianity as a system of doctrine and worship only, and too little as a life. The aim of this book is to show how doctrine should become life, how

promises should be rod and staff in the climber's hand, and how the Sabbath-life should pour itself through all the week-days, making every hour bright with the radiance of heaven. It is dedicated to those who sincerely want to follow all the precepts and to realize in their own experience all the joys, inspirations and comforts of religion, and to fulfill in this world the meaning of life in all its splendor and possibility.

WEEK-DAY RELIGION.

I.

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

"A sacred burden is the life ye bear.
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly;
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly;
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win."

WHAT one thinks about life, what conception he has of that strange thing called existence—particularly what he thinks of his own individual life—is a most vital matter. Life is noble or ignoble, glorious or groveling, just as a right or wrong, a high or a low, conception is cherished in the heart. No man builds higher or better than his plans. No artist surpasses in marble or on canvas the beauty imaged in his soul, and no one's life can rise in grandeur above the thoughts of life which live in his heart.

No conception is true or worthy which does not

consider life in its perspective, not as cut off and limited by the bounds of earthly existence, but as stretching away into immortality and vital at every point with important relations and solemn responsibilities. We are more than animals. Our lives are not little separate atoms of existence each one complete in itself and independent of all other atoms. He plans very shortsightedly who has no outlook from his hut in his narrow island-home in the great wide sea, and who sees no existence for himself beyond the stoppage of his heart's pulses—that strange experience which men call death.

We can only learn to live worthily when we take into our view and plan all the unending years that lie beyond the grave. We want a vivid and masterful consciousness of our personal immortality. A man who sees but a few bits of rock chipped from El Capitan, and a few dried leaves and faded flowers plucked from the trees that grow in that wondrous valley, has no true conception of the grandeur of the Yosemite; and no more just conception of human existence in its fullness and vastness has he who sees only the little fragment of broken, marred and shattered years which are fulfilled on this earth. We must try to see life as

sweeping away into eternity if we would grasp its meaning and have a true sense of its grandeur or realize its solemn responsibility.

There are streams among the mountains which, after flowing a little way on the surface in a current broken, vexed and tossing, amid rocks, over cascades, through dark chasms, sink away out of sight and seem to be lost. You see their flashing crystal no more. But far down the mountain, amid the sweet valley scenes, they emerge again, these same streams, and flow away, no longer tossed and restless, but quiet and peaceful as they move on toward the sea. So our restless, perplexed lives roll in rocky channels a little way on the earth and then pass out of sight and it seems the end. But it is not the end. Leaping through the dark cavern of the grave, they will reappear, fuller, deeper, grander, on the other side, vexed and broken no longer, but realizing all the peace, joy and beauty of Christ; and thus they will flow on for ever. This is no poet's fancy, no Utopian dream of a golden age, no mere picture of imagination. Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel. Since Christ has risen again death is abolished, and to every one who believes in him there is the certainty of an endless life of blessedness in his pres-

ence and service. We only begin to live when the consciousness of immortality breaks upon our hearts.

Then there is another element in every true conception of life which is equally essential. No life hangs in mid-air, without relations, connections or attachments, without dependences and responsibilities. A man may not tear himself out of the web of humanity and pass all his years on some solitary island in the sea, cutting every tie, casting off all responsibility, living without reference to God or man, law or duty, and fulfill in any sense the true meaning of life.

In every direction there are cords of attachment which reach out and bind every fragment of humanity fast in one great web; and these attachments are inextricable. We may ignore them, but we cannot break one of them. We may be disloyal to every one of them, but we cannot cut one thread of obligation.

A little reflection will show us what these connections are. Whence are we? What is the origin of this life we bear about with us? What are our relations to God the Creator? Our life sprang from his hand. Not only so, but it is dependent upon him. No more does the trembling leaf hang upon the bough and depend upon it for support

and very life than does every human life hang upon God, depending upon him for stay and support and for its momentary existence.

Then, as we think of ourselves as Christians, this thought is infinitely deepened. What is a Christian life? We are accustomed to say that it is a life redeemed by Christ's death. More closely defined, it is a life that is taken up out of the ruin of sin and attached to the life of Christ. Apart from him men are but dead and withering branches having no life, but when attached to him they become living branches covered with leaves and fruit. As we think of it we see Christ as the one great central Life of the world and ourselves living only in him, our little fragment of being utterly dependent upon him for every beauty, blessing and hope. We live only in him. He takes our sins and gives us his righteousness. He takes our weakness and unites it, like a branch grafted upon a tree, to his own glorious fullness of strength. Our emptiness he attaches to his divine completeness. Our lives feed upon him, and are in every sense dependent upon him. We have nothing and we are nothing which we do not receive from him.

Out of this relation come the most binding and farreaching obligations to God—obligations of

gratitude, praise, trust, obedience, service. Our life is not in any sense our own. Its purpose is not fulfilled unless it is lived to accomplish the end for which it was created and redeemed. We begin to study the Scriptures and to ask what is the chief end of life, and we have not to read between the lines to find the answer. Everything has been made with some design. Even a grain of sand has its uses. It helps build up the mountain, or it forms part of the great wall that holds the sea in its place, or it helps by its infinitesimal weight to balance the system of worlds. A drop of water has its purposes and uses. Creeping into the bosom of the drooping flower or sinking down to its roots, it revives it. It may help to quench the thirst of a dying soldier. It may paint a rainbow on the clouds. It may help to float great ships or add its little plash to the chorus of ocean's majestic music.

"Each drop uncounted in a storm of rain
Hath its own mission;
The very shadow of an insect's wing—
For which the violet cared not while it stayed,
Yet felt the lighter for it vanishing—
Proves that the sun was shining by its shade."

And if such minute things have their purpose, how

grand must be the end for which each human life was made!

We think further, and we find a wondrous network of attachments binding our little fragments of being to the great web of life around us. There are a thousand relationships which link us to our fellow-men, to home, to church, to country, to society, to truth, to humanity, to duty; and every one of these connections implies responsibility. Obligations touch our lives on all sides. Duties come to us from every point. Every human relationship is solemn with its weight of responsibility.

We think again, and we find that we are in a world in which our minutest acts start results that go on for ever. The little ripple caused by the plash of the boy's oar in the quiet bay goes rolling on and on until it breaks on every distant shore of the ocean; the word spoken in the air causes reverberations which go quivering on for ever in space; and these scientific facts are but feeble illustrations of the influences of human actions and words in this world.

"Our many deeds, the thoughts that we have thought,
They go out from us, thronging every hour,
And in them all is folded up a power
That on the earth doth move them to and fro;

And mighty are the marvels they have wrought
In hearts we know not, and may never know."

This fact charges every moment with most intense interest. The very air about us is vital, and carries the secret pulsations and the most unconscious influences of our lives far abroad; and not only so, but these influences sweep away into eternity. There is not a moment of our life which does not exert a power that shall be felt millions of ages hence. There is something about the vitality and the immortality of human influence that is fearful to contemplate and that makes it a grandly solemn thing to live, especially when we remember that these qualities belong to the evil as well as the good of our lives.

"The deeds we do, the words we say,
Into thin air they seem to fleet;
We count them ever past,
But they shall last:
In the dread judgment they
And we shall meet."

We think once more, and we find that life has another attachment—forward to the bar of God. We must render account for all the deeds done in the body. We read more deeply into the divine revelation, and learn that this accountability extends to all the minutest acts and words and thoughts

that drop from hand and lip and heart as we move along. It even reaches to the unconscious influences that breathe out from us like the fragrance of a flower. We must meet our whole life again before God's throne, and give account not only for what we have done, evil and good, but also for all that we ought to have done—for the undeveloped possibilities of our lives and their unimproved opportunities.

It is in the light of such facts as these that we must regard the life that is given to each of us. It is indeed a sacred burden. It is no light and easy thing so to live as to fulfill the end for which we were made and redeemed. Life is no mere play. Every moment of it is intensely real and charged with eternal responsibility. It is when we look at life in this way that we see our need of Christ. Apart from him there can be only failure and ruin. But if we give ourselves to him, he takes up our poor perishing fragment of being, cleanses it, puts his own life into it, and nurtures it for a glorious immortality.

Under a plain marble monument sleeps the dust of one of God's dearest children,* who gave her

* Mary Lyon, founder of Mount Holyoke Seminary. She used to give to the girls in her graduating class this motto

life to his cause in unwearying service till its last power was exhausted. Cut in the stone that marks her last resting-place is this memorable sentence from her own lips, which tells the secret of her consecration: "There is nothing in the universe that I fear except that I may not know all my duty, or may fail to do it." With such a sense of personal responsibility pressing upon the heart at every moment, life cannot fail to be beautiful and well rounded here, and to pass to a coronation of glory hereafter.

also: "My dear girls, when you choose your fields of labor, go where nobody else is willing to go."

II.

GETTING HELP FROM THE BIBLE.

OFTENTIMES young Christians say, "I cannot find the beautiful things in the Bible, nor can I acquire a taste or relish for it. I want to love it and to use it so as to receive help from it, but it does not open its riches to me. I appreciate the wealth and beauties which others find in it and point out to me, but when I look for them they do not discover themselves to me. After I have read a chapter and found nothing beautiful or helpful, another will read it and point out the sweetest bits of beauty and the rarest words and suggestions of comfort and helpfulness, not one of which I had seen. They seem to have hidden from me, like coy birds amid the branches, but when another came they flew out, and in their shining plumage sat on the boughs or perched on his shoulder and sang snatches of heavenly song. I read the book, but I confess that it yields me no honey, no food, no wine of life."

It is quite possible that this experience is more common than we think or than many are honest enough to confess. There are few, if any, who find in the Bible all the beauty and blessing that lie in its pages. Not one of us gets from it the utmost possible of help, and no doubt most of us in our reading pass by many rare and precious things which we fail to see at all.

Yet it surely need not be a sealed book to any one. It does not aim to hide its good things away so that men cannot easily find them. It is not intended to be a book that great scholars only can understand. No doubt a knowledge of the languages in which the Bible was originally written explains many an obscure passage and resolves many a difficulty, yet it is not a book for the learned alone, but for the unlettered and the little children as well. In proof of this we have only to remember that oftentimes those who find the richest treasures and the sweetest joys in the Scriptures are not the greatest scholars and the grandest intellects, but God's little ones, strangers to the world's lore and ignorant of its wisdom.

Very much depends upon the spirit with which we come to the Bible. In the minds of many Protestants there is almost as much superstition

regarding this sacred book as there is among Romanists regarding the crucifix or rosary. Soldiers entering a battle fling away their cards and put Bibles in their pockets. They feel that they are safer then. Many think if they read a certain portion every day, though they give no thought to the meaning, that they have done a holy service and are safe for the day. But the mere reading of so many chapters does no one any good. It would be as well to say Latin prayers and fumble over a string of beads for ten minutes. To receive blessing from the Bible it must be read thoughtfully with inquiry and meditation. It must be allowed to read itself into our heart and life.

As to the method of reading, several suggestions may be made. It is important to have a good copy of the Bible, well bound, with clear, plain type and with references. On many passages there is no commentary so helpful as the reading of the references. Scripture interprets Scripture. Hence, a copy without references is shorn of much of its value. We want a copy, too, that will last for many years. A book is like a friend; it grows familiar and confidential with use. At first shy and distant, it lets us into its heart after we have long pored over its pages. It opens of itself to

the choicest chapters, and it seems to carry its sweetest secrets on the surface for us. A Bible that we have long used seems to say things to us we never hear from a strange or new book. Besides, it is good to mark our Bible as we read it. Any precious passage that we find may be indicated on the margin by some sign or by drawing a line about it or under the sacred words. Thus we write our own spiritual history on the pages of our Bible. These marks are memorials, also, showing where we once found blessing—stones set up to mark our Bethels and Peniels and Ebenezers. A book thus read, and holding on its pages such treasures, becomes in a few years inestimably sacred and precious. Hence the importance of having at almost any cost the very best copy of the Bible that can be obtained—one that can be used for a lifetime.

No one can afford to dispense with the old-fashioned way of reading the Bible through consecutively. It is well to do this every year. Some open at random and read whatever comes under their eye, without method or plan. Others read over and over a few favorite passages. In both cases large portions remain neglected and are never read at all. Reading the whole volume in course, in regular daily portions, we become familiar with

every part, and discover the very richest things in places where we least expected to find any beauty or blessing.

But in addition to this it is well to pursue other special methods. Topical reading is excellent. We select a subject and by the aid of concordance, reference and text-book find out all the passages in the whole Scripture which speak of it or throw any light upon it. Thus we learn what are the doctrines of the Bible. In this way we may bring all the teachings of men to the bar of God's truth; we may verify the doctrines of the Church; we may refer all questions that arise in our own minds as to belief or as to duty to the infallible test; and thus we shall build our personal creeds, not on the formulated statements of theologians, but on the simple words of inspiration.

In the daily life of each one there arise peculiar questions and experiences on which we want light or in which we need counsel and guidance. These should be taken at once to the divine word. Thus we bring the book of life into our daily history. We make it our counselor, our lamp, our guide. This leads to another method of reading and study which is very profitable and which yields great help.

The habit of having a verse for the day has also been adopted by many and has been a source of great comfort. Either out of the morning's chapter or selected in some other way, let one verse be taken, fixed in the mind, and carried all through the busy day in thought and meditation. It will often prove a fountain of water, a bright lamp or a rod and staff before the day comes to a close. It is impossible to estimate the influence of a simple passage thus held all day in the thoughts. It keeps us from sin. It is a living impulse to duty. It is an angel of comfort in sorrow. Then its influence, as it pours its soft, pure light all through the life hour after hour, is full of inspiration, and purifies, cleanses and sanctifies.

So much for methods. Still more important is the spirit in which we read. We must come to it as to the oracles of God, infallible and authoritative. We must hear the voice of God in its words. Then we must come in the spirit of docility, ready to be taught. Some read it, not to learn what they ought to believe, but to find in it what they themselves do believe already, to have their opinions confirmed or their conduct justified. Only those who come as little chil-

dren, with teachable spirits, to hear what God will say, and ready to accept it however it may clash with their own opinions and preferences, can find the Bible an open book disclosing to them its most precious things.

It must also be read thoughtfully, slowly and patiently. Many of its richest gems lie deep and must be digged for. It is not so much a flower-garden as a mine. There is a great deal of hurried, superficial reading which skims over the surface, which pauses to weigh no word, take in no thought, apply no lesson, and which leaves no impression, not even a memory, behind. Such readers must use a marker, or they will read the same chapter over and over without knowing it.

Then it is necessary to read the Bible not alone to know the will of God, but that we may do it. If it is not the guide of our life, it is nothing to us. Its truths are to be applied. If we read the beatitudes, we are to compare ourselves with their divine requirements and seek to be conformed to them. If we come upon a word that rebukes any habit or spirit of ours, we are straightway to make the needed amendment. We are to accept its promises, believe them, and act as believing them. We are to allow its comforts to

enter our hearts and support us in sorrow. There is nothing written in the Bible merely for ornament or beauty. Every word is practical. There is no truth in it that has not some bearing upon actual living. When we come to it eager to know how to live and ready to obey its precepts, we shall find it opening to us its inmost meaning.

We are told that the Bible must be spiritually discerned. Only a spiritually-minded reader finds the truest and best things in it. We must bring to it a certain kind of knowledge. This is true in all departments of life. Many persons never see anything lovely in nature. They will stand amid the most picturesque landscapes, walk amid the rarest flowers and witness the most gorgeous sunset splendor without a thrill of pleasure or an expression of admiration. They have no sympathy with nature. There are many who will pass through a grand art-gallery rich with paintings and statuary, and see nothing to seize their attention, while others will spend days in enthusiastic study of the works of art that are stored there. Some knowledge of art and an interest in it are necessary to the appreciation and enjoyment of paintings and statues. In like manner, he that would find the beautiful things in the Scriptures

must have a mind and heart prepared for it. Hence the more of the divine life we have in our souls, the more will the sacred pages reveal to us. It is not so much intellectual acumen and fine scholarship that we need as spiritual culture, love for Christ and the warmth of devotion.

A young lady purchased a book and read a few pages, but was not interested in it. Some months afterward she met the author, and a tender friendship sprang up, ripening into love and betrothal. Then the book was dull no longer. Every sentence had a charm for her heart. Love was the interpreter. So to those who do not know Christ personally the Bible seems dry and uninteresting. But when they learn to know him and to love him all is changed; and the deeper their love for him becomes, the more do the sacred pages glow with beauty and light.

It is good to store away in our hearts, all along the bright years of youth, the precious truths of God's word. In visiting the Mammoth Cave they placed lamps in our hands before we entered. It seemed a very useless and needless thing to carry these pale lights while we walked in the full blaze of noonday. But we moved down the bank and entered the cavern's mouth. Quickly the splendor

of daylight faded out, and then the lamp-flames began to shine brightly. We soon found how valuable they were, and how necessary. Without them we should have been lost in the thick gloom and in the inextricable mazes of the cave. So God's promises and comforts may not seem needful to us in the brightness of youth and in the days of health and gladness. They may then seem to shine with but a pale light. But as we move on we shall pass into shadows—the shadows of sickness, of trial, of disappointment, of sorrow—and then their beauty and splendor will shine out and prove the very joy and strength of our souls.

III.

PRACTICAL CONSECRATION.

"I used to chafe and fret when interrupted in favorite pursuits, but I have learned that my time all belongs to God, and I just leave it in his hands. It is very sweet to use it for him when he has anything for me to do, and pleasant to use it for myself when he has not."—MRS. PRENTISS.

A GREAT deal of our talk about consecration is very vague and visionary. We are told that we should make an unreserved transfer of ourselves to Christ, and we want to do it. We wish to keep nothing back from him. We adopt the formula of consecration when we connect ourselves with the church. We use the liturgy of consecration continually in our prayers, saying over and over again—sincerely enough, too—that we give ourselves wholly to Christ. We sing with glowing heart and flowing tears the rapturous hymns of consecration, and yet, somehow, we are not wholly consecrated to Christ. Saying it, pray-

ing it, singing it, ever so honestly and with ever so endless repetition, we are still painfully conscious of failure in fact, and we become discouraged, sometimes even doubting altogether the reality of our conversion because we cannot consciously keep ourselves on the altar.

One trouble is that the consecration we aim at is emotional rather than practical. Then another is that we try to accomplish too much at once. We attempt to make over all our life, in its endlessly varied relations, and all our present and future, once for all in a single offering, and then it seems to our limited experience that that should be final. The spirit and intention are right enough, but the fact is that in actual life such consecration is quite impracticable. Theoretically it is correct, but in experience it will always be found vague and unsatisfactory. The only truly practical consecration is that which seeks to cover the actual present. However fully we may have given ourselves to Christ at conversion, it will avail nothing unless we renew it with each separate act and duty as it presents itself to us.

Consecration may be greatly simplified and may be made intensely practical if we bring it down to a daily matter, attempting to cover no more

than the one day, and if we each morning formally give the day to the Lord, to be occupied as he may wish, surrendering all our plans to him, to be set aside or affirmed by him as he may choose.

For example, I seek in the morning to give myself to my Master for that day, saying, "Take me, Lord, and use me to-day as thou wilt. I lay all my plans at thy feet. Whatever work thou hast for me to do, give it into my hands. If there are those thou wouldst have me help in any way, send them to me or send me to them. Take my time and use it just as thou wilt." I think no farther on than to-day. I make no attempt to give months and years to Christ. Why should I, before they are mine? I have this one brief day only, and how can I consecrate that which I have not yet received?

This formula of consecration is a transfer of one's plans and ambitions into the hands of Christ. It is a solemn pledge, too, to accept the plans of the Master for the occupation of the day, no matter how much they may interfere with arrangements we have already made, or how many pleasant things they may cut out of the day's programme. We will answer every call. We will patiently submit to every interruption. We will

accept every duty. We will go on with the work which seems best to us if the Master has nothing else for us to do; but if he has, we will cheerfully drop our own and take up that which he clearly gives instead.

So, sometimes, the very first one to come to me in the golden hours of the morning, which are so precious to every student, is a book-agent, or a man with fountain-pens or stove-polish, or perchance only a pious idler who has no errand but to pass an hour, or it may be one of those social newsvenders who like to be the first to retail all the freshest gossip. Interrupted thus in the midst of some interesting and important work, my first impulse is to chafe and fret, and perhaps to give my visitor a cold welcome, not hiding my annoyance. But then I remember my morning consecration. Did I not put my plans and my time out of my own hands into my Master's? Did I not ask him to send me any work he had for me to do, and to make use of me in ministering to others as he would? If I was sincere and would be loyal to my words, must I not accept this early caller as sent to me for some help or some good which it is in my power to impart to him? If I would carry out the spirit of my consecra-

tion, I must neither chafe, nor fret, nor manifest any annoyance at the interruption, nor do aught to give needless pain to my visitor.

I have an errand to thee, O man my brother! What it is I know not. Perhaps here is a heavy heart that I can cheer by a few kindly words. I cannot buy anything. I cannot give up an hour to hear my friend recount, for the hundredth time, the story of his past exploits. I cannot listen to the wretched gossip which my mischievous visitor wants to empty into my ear; and yet may I not have an errand to each? It may be that I can send my literary friend away with a little bit of song in his heart. He came from a very dreary home this morning. He is poor. He has gone from house to house, only to have door after door rudely shut in his face. He is heavy-hearted, almost in despair. He greatly needs money, which perhaps I cannot give to him, but he needs far more. Just now a brother's sympathy—which I can give—and a kind, cordial reception, a few minutes' patient interest shown in listening to his story, a few encouraging words, any suggestion or help I may be able to give, will do him more good than if I were to buy a book in the usual unchristian way in such cases. Or may I not be able to drop some

useful word into the ear of the idler or of the gossipmonger which may be remembered? I must, at least, regard my visitor as sent to me with some need that I can supply, or wanting some comfort or blessing which I can impart.

Or the errand may be the other way. He may have been sent to me with a benediction. All duty is not giving; we need to receive as well. We ought to get some good from every one we meet. God can oftentimes teach us more by interrupting our quiet hours and by setting all our pet plans aside than if he had left us to spend the time over our book or in our work.

Let us at least beware that we do not bow out of our door with fretted frown one whom God has sent to us either with a message or a benediction for us, which must be carried on to some other, since we reject it. For even in these prosaic days Heaven sends angels, though they may come unawares, not wearing their celestial robes, but disguised in unattractive garb.

Such a simple consecration is easily understood, and becomes very practical as we carry it out in life. It deals with living in its details, and not in the mass—in the concrete, and not merely in the abstract. It is not theory alone, but practice also.

And it seems easier to give just one short day at a time than to try to span far-stretching years in our consecration. A day is a short reach. We can bear almost any burden or interruption for so brief a period. Then it gives a holy meaning to the common week-day routine of work and contact with other lives to live in this simple way. All work is divinely allotted, and the voice of our loving Lord is heard calling us at every turn. It imparts a sacredness to all our meetings—even our most casual meetings with others. There is no chance that the eternal God does not guide. You have an errand to every one who comes in your path, or he has an errand to you. You may be very weary, but if there is a call for Christlike ministry you must obey it. You may have your wrapper and slippers on after a hard day's work, and outside it may be dark and stormy. But no matter; either you must withdraw your morning's consecration, or you must follow the voice that calls you to deeds of mercy and love.

If we learn well this lesson, it takes the drudgery out of all duties. It lifts up the commonest intercourse of life into blessed service at Christ's feet. It makes us patient and gentle when dealing with the most disagreeable people. It imparts a

high, a divine, motive to all friendship and companionship. It teaches us patience amid the interruptions and disarrangements of our plans. It disciplines our wayward wills in little things and brings them into subjection to Christ. It takes the frivolity out of our conversation. It makes us ever watchful of our influence over others and of our treatment of them. It makes us ever ready and eager both to receive and impart help and blessing. Then it makes consecration to Christ not a dim, far-away, merely theoretical thing, but a living, practical experience which charges all life with meaning, and which takes hold of the most commonplace things in our prosaic week-day routine, transforming them into beautiful ministries around the feet of God.

IV.

HELPS FOR WORRIED WEEK-DAYS.

"If only we strive to be pure and true,
To each of us all there will come an hour
When the tree of life shall burst into flower,
And rain at our feet the glorious dower
Of something grander than ever we knew."

WE have only successfully acquired the art of living a Christian life when we have learned to apply the principles of religion and enjoy its help and comfort in our daily life. It is easy to join in devotional exercises, to quote promises, to extol the beauty of the Scriptures; but there are many who do these things whose religion utterly fails them in the very places and at the very times when it ought to prove their staff and stay.

All of us must go out from the sweet services of the Sabbath into a week of very real and very prosaic life. We must mingle with people that are not angels. We must pass through experiences that will naturally worry and vex us. Those about us, either wittingly or unwittingly, annoy and

try us. Many a young Christian must mingle with those who do not love Christ. Every one meets many anxieties and worries in ordinary week-day life. There are continual irritations and annoyances.

The problem is to live a beautiful Christian life in the face of all these hindrances. How can we get through the tangled briers which grow along our path without having our hands and feet torn by them? How can we live sweetly amid the vexing and irritating things and the multitude of little worries and frets which infest our way, and which we cannot evade?

It is not enough merely to get along in any sort of way, to drag to the close of each long, wearisome day, happy when night comes to end the strife. Life should be a joy, and not a burden. We should live victoriously, ever master of our experiences, and not tossed by them like a leaf on the dashing waves. Every earnest Christian wants to live a truly beautiful life, whatever the circumstances may be.

A little child, when asked what it was to be a Christian, replied, "For me to be a Christian is to live as Jesus would live and behave as Jesus would behave if he were a little girl and lived at

our house." No better definition of practical religion could be given. Each one of us is to bear himself just as Jesus would if he were living out our little life in the midst of its actual environment, standing all day just where we stand, mingling with the same people with whom we must mingle, and exposed to the very annoyances, trials and provocations to which we are exposed. We want to live a life that will please God, and that will bear witness on its face to the genuineness of our piety.

How can we do this? We must first recognize the fact that our life must be lived just in its own circumstances. We cannot at present change our surroundings. Whatever we are to make of our lives must be made in the midst of our actual experiences. Here we must either win our victories or suffer our defeats. We may think our lot hard and may wish it were otherwise, that we had a life of ease and luxury, amid softer scenes, with no briers or thorns, no worries or provocations. Then we should be always gentle, patient, serene, trustful, happy. How delightful it would be never to have a care, an irritation, a cross, a single vexing thing!

But meanwhile this fact remains—that our aspiration cannot be realized, and that whatever our life

is to be made, beautiful or marred, we must make it just where we are. No restless discontent can change our lot. We cannot get into any elysium merely by longing for it. Other persons may have other circumstances, possibly more pleasant than ours, but here are ours. We may as well settle this point at once and accept the battle of life on this field, else, while we are vainly wishing for a better chance, the opportunity for victory shall have passed.

The next thought is that the place in which we find ourselves is the place in which the Master desires us to live our life.

> "Thou cam'st not to thy place by accident:
> It is the very place God meant for thee."

There is no haphazard in this world. God leads every one of his children by the right way. He knows where and under what influences each particular life will ripen best. One tree grows best in the sheltered valley, another by the water's edge, another on the bleak mountain-top swept by storms. There is always adaptation in nature. Every tree or plant is found in the locality where the conditions of its growth exist, and does God give more thought to trees and plants than to his

own children? He places us amid the circumstances and experiences in which our life will grow and ripen the best. The peculiar discipline to which we are each subjected is the discipline we severally need to bring out in us the beauties and graces of true spiritual character. We are in the right school. We may think that we would ripen more quickly in a more easy and luxurious life, but God knows what is best; he makes no mistakes.

There is a little fable which says that a primrose growing by itself in a shady corner of the garden became discontented as it saw the other flowers in their gay beds in the sunshine, and begged to be removed to a more conspicuous place. Its prayer was granted. The gardener transplanted it to a more showy and sunny spot. It was greatly pleased, but there came a change over it immediately. Its blossoms lost much of their beauty and became pale and sickly. The hot sun caused them to faint and wither. So it prayed again to be taken back to its old place in the shade. The wise gardener knows best where to plant each flower, and so God, the divine Husbandman, knows where his people will best grow into what he would have them to be. Some require the fierce storms,

some will only thrive spiritually in the shadow of worldly adversity, and some come to ripeness more sweetly under the soft and gentle influences of prosperity whose beauty rough experiences would mar. He knows what is best for each one.

The next thought is that it is possible to live a beautiful life anywhere. There is no position in this world in the allotment of Providence in which it is not possible to be a true Christian exemplifying all the virtues of Christianity. The grace of Christ has in it potency enough to enable us to live well wherever we are called to dwell. When God chooses a home for us, he fits us for its peculiar trials. There is a beautiful law of compensation that runs through all God's providence. Animals made to dwell amid Arctic snows are covered with warm furs. The camel's home is the desert, and a wondrous provision is made by which it can endure long journeys across the hot sands without drink. Birds are fitted for their flights in the air. Animals made to live among the mountain-crags have feet prepared for climbing over the steep rocks. In all nature this law of special equipment and preparation for allotted places prevails.

And the same is true in spiritual life. God

adapts his grace to the peculiarities of each one's necessity. For rough, flinty paths he provides shoes of iron. He never sends any one to climb sharp, rugged mountain-sides wearing silken slippers. He gives always grace sufficient. As the burdens grow heavier the strength increases. As the difficulties thicken the angel draws closer. As the trials become sorer the trusting heart grows calmer. Jesus always sees his disciples when they are toiling in the waves, and at the right moment comes to deliver them. Thus it becomes possible to live a true and victorious life in any circumstances. Christ can as easily enable Joseph to remain pure and true in heathen Egypt as Benjamin in the shelter of his father's love. The sharper the temptations, the more of divine grace is granted. There is, therefore, no environment of trial or difficulty or hardship in which we cannot live beautiful lives of Christian fidelity and approved conduct.

Instead, then, of yielding to discouragement when trials multiply and it becomes hard to live right, or of being satisfied with a broken peace and a very faulty life, it should be the settled purpose of each one to live, through the grace of God, a patient, gentle and unspotted life in the place

and amid the circumstances allotted. The true victory is not found in escaping or evading trials, but in rightly meeting and enduring them. The questions should not be, "How can I get out of these worries? How can I get into a place where there shall be no irritations, nothing to try my temper or put my patience to the test? How can I avoid the distractions that continually harass me?" There is nothing noble in such living. The soldier who flies to the rear when he smells the battle is no hero; he is a coward.

The questions should rather be, "How can I pass through these trying experiences and not fail as a Christian? How can I endure these struggles and not suffer defeat? How can I live amid these provocations, these reproaches and testings of my temper, and yet live sweetly, not speaking unadvisedly, bearing injuries meekly, returning gentle answers to insulting words?" This is the true problem of Christian living.

We are at school here. This life is disciplinary. Processes are not important: it is results we want. If a tree grow into majesty and strength, it matters not whether it be in the deep vale or on the cold peak, whether calm or storm nurture it. If character develop into Christlike symmetry,

what does it matter whether it be in ease and luxury or through hardship? The important matter is not the process, but the result—not the means, but the end; and the end of all Christian nurture is spiritual loveliness. To be made truly noble and godlike we should be willing to submit to any discipline.

Every obstacle to true living should, then, only nerve us with fresh determination to succeed. We should use each difficulty and hardship as a leverage to gain some new advantage. We should compel our temptations to minister to us instead of hindering us. We should regard all our provocations, annoyances and trials, of whatever sort, as practice-lessons in the application of the theories of Christian life. It will be seen in the end that the hardships and difficulties are by no means the smallest blessings of our lives. Some one compares them to the weights of a clock, without which there could be no steady, orderly life.

The tree that grows where tempests toss its boughs and bend its trunk, often almost to breaking, is more firmly rooted than the tree which grows in the sequestered valley where no storm ever brings stress or strain. The same is true in life. The grandest character is grown in hardship. Effeminacy springs out of luxury. The

best men the world ever reared have been brought up in the school of adversity and hardship.

Besides, it is no heroism to live patiently where there is no provocation, bravely where there is no danger, calmly where there is nothing to perturb. Not the hermit's cave, but the heart of busy life, tests as well as makes character. If we can live patiently, lovingly and cheerfully amid all our frets and irritations day after day, year after year, that is grander heroism than the farthest-famed military exploits, for he that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city.

This is our allotted task. It is no easy one. It can be accomplished only by the most resolute decision, with unwavering purpose and incessant watchfulness.

Nor can it be accomplished without the continual help of Christ. Each one's battle must be a personal one. We may decline the struggle, but it will be declining also the joy of victory. No one can reach the summit without climbing the steep mountain-path. We cannot be borne up on any strong shoulder. No one, not even God, can carry us up. Heaven does not put features of beauty into our lives as the jeweler sets gems in clusters in a coronet. The unlovely elements are not re-

moved and replaced by lovely ones like slides in the stereopticon. Each must win his way through struggles and efforts to all noble attainments. The help of God is given only in co-operation with human aspiration and energy. While God works in us, we are to work out our own salvation. He that overcometh shall be a pillar in the temple of God.

We should accept the task with quiet joy. We shall fail many times. Many a night we shall retire to weep at Christ's feet over the day's defeat. In our efforts to follow the copy set for us by our Lord, we shall write many a crooked line and leave many a blotted page blistered with tears of regret. Yet we must keep through all a brave heart, an unfaltering purpose and a calm, joyful confidence in God. Temporary defeat should only cause us to lean on Christ more fully. Heaven is on the side of every one who is loyally struggling to do the divine will and to grow into Christlikeness. And that means assured victory to every one whose heart fails not.

"If only we strive to be pure and true,
The foam of the sea will lower its crest,
And the weary waves that we used to breast
Will sob and turn, and sink slowly to rest
With a tender calm all over and through."

V.

THE CURE FOR CARE.

"God writes straight on crooked lines."—Spanish Proverb.

THERE is no life into which do not come many things calculated to cause anxiety and distraction of mind. There are great sorrows; there are perplexities as to duty; there are disappointments and losses; there are annoyances and hindrances; there are chafings and irritations in ordinary life; and there are countless petty cares and frets. All of these tend to break the heart's peace and to disturb its quiet, yet there is no lesson that is urged more continuously or more earnestly in the Scriptures than that a Christian should never worry or let care oppress his heart. He is to live without distraction and with peace unbroken even in the midst of the most trying experiences.

If, then, we are never to be anxious, never to take distracting thought, what are we to do with the thousand things calculated to perplex us and

produce anxiety? If we are not to take thought about these matters, who will do it for us? Who is to think for us? Who is to unravel the tangles for our unskilled fingers? When cares and anxieties come to our hearts, *what are we to do with them?*

Some one may say that it is impossible to avoid worrying. The disturbing experiences will come into our lives, and we cannot shut them out. It is true they will come, but it is not true that we must admit them and surrender ourselves to their power. It was a saying of Luther that we cannot prevent the birds flying about our heads, but we can prevent them building their nests in our hair. In like manner, it is impossible to keep cares from flocking in great swarms around us, but it is our own fault if they are allowed to make nests in our hearts. We are to hold our hearts' doors and windows shut against them just as resolutely as against the temptations that constantly assail us, craving admission into our lives.

This applies to all our worries, whether great or small. We are apt to say, "Oh yes, but my trial is peculiar. It is one of those that cannot be kept out, laid down or cast off." But there is no such exception made in the divine plan of living

marked out for us in the inspired word. Anxiety or distraction is never to be admitted. Nothing, small or great, is to disturb our peace. We may have sorrow or suffering or toil or painful stress and strain, but never worry.

What, then, is the divine life-plan? What are we to do with our cares?

Everything that threatens to give us anxiety is to be taken at once to God. Nothing is too great to carry to him. Does not he bear up all worlds? Does not he rule over all the affairs of the universe? Is there any matter in our life, how great soever it may seem to us, too hard for him to manage? Is any perplexity too sore for him to resolve? Is any human despair too dark for him to illumine with hope? Is there any tangle or confusion out of which he cannot extricate us? Or is anything too small to bring to him? Is he not our Father, and is he not interested in whatever concerns us? There is not one of the countless things that fly like specks of dust all through our daily life, tending to vex and fret us, that we may not take to God. And this is the cure which the Scriptures prescribe for care. The divine philosophy of living says, "Be anxious for nothing, but make everything known to God; in everything, by

prayer and thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Refer every disturbing thing to him that he may bear the burden of it.

"But why should I have to make it known to him?" asks some one. "He knows all about it already. Why must I take it to him?" It is reason enough that he has asked us to do it; and if we will not make it known to him, can we complain if he does not help us? He wants us to learn to confide in him and to flee to him in every moment of perplexity or pressure. Whenever there comes into our experience a difficulty, an annoyance—anything that tends to produce irritation or anxiety or alarm or confusion—we are to carry it at once to God. We are to get it somehow out of our unskilled hands and off our frail shoulder into the hands and over upon the shoulder of Christ.

It is not enough to kneel down and make a prayer, nor is it enough to pray about the particular matter that worries us, asking for help or deliverance. Only the most simple-hearted definiteness in prayer will meet the need. We must bring the very perplexity itself and put it out of our hands into God's that he may work it out for us. We are to bring the matter as literally to him as we would carry a broken watch to the watchmaker's,

leaving it for him to repair and readjust. A little child playing with a handful of cords, when they begin to get into a tangle, goes at once to her mother that her patient fingers may unravel the snarl. How much better this than to pull and tug at the cords till the tangle becomes inextricable! May not many of us learn a lesson from the little child? Would it not be better for us, whenever we find the smallest entanglement in any of our affairs or the arising of any perplexity, to take it at once to God that his skillful hands may set it right?

Then, having taken it to him and put it into his hands, we are to leave it with him; having gotten it off our own shoulder upon his, we are to allow it to remain there. But it is just at this point that most of us fail. We tell God about our worries, and then go on worrying still as if we had never gone to him at all or as if he had refused to help us. We pray about our cares, but do not cast them off. We make supplication, but do not unlade our burdens. Praying does us no good. It makes us no more contented or submissive, or patient, or peaceful. We do not get the worries out of our own hands at all. This is the vital point in the whole matter.

Or perhaps we do cast the burden upon God while we are praying, and feel for the moment a strange sense of joy in our soul. We rise and go a few steps as light-hearted as an angel. We have given God our cares to keep. But in a little while we have gathered up all the old burdens and anxieties again and have them once more on our own shoulder, and we go bowing under them, fretting and worrying as before.

> "A step or two on wingèd feet,
> And then I turned to share
> The burden thou hadst taken up
> Of ever-pressing care;
> So what I would not leave with thee
> Of course I had to bear."

But is that the best the religion of Christ can do for us? Is that the full meaning of the privilege expressed in so many golden promises in the Scriptures? Is a little moment's rest from anxiety in the midst of long days of care all that it is possible for us to obtain? During the brief pauses of a great battle the soldiers heard a sparrow sing snatches of song from among the branches of a tree. Then, when the awful roar burst out again, its song was hushed. Is that the full meaning of the peace that Christ promises? Is

it only a sweet bird-note now and then amid the long days and years of discontent and struggle? They sadly misread the blessed words of divine comfort who find nothing better than this promise. We are permitted to roll our care entirely over on God and to let it stay there. We are to put the broken plan, the shattered hope, the tangled work, the complicated affair, into the hands of the God of providence, leaving the ordering and outcome of it to his wisdom. The provocation, the friction, the burden that presses sorely, the annoyance, the hindrance,—instead of permitting ourselves to be vexed, exasperated or disturbed by them, we are quietly to turn the matter over to God, and then go on calmly to the next duty that comes to our hand.

And, having done this, we are to cease to worry. We have given the perplexity to God. We have asked him to think for us, plan for us and take the ordering of the affair into his own hands. It is our matter, therefore, no longer, but his. Should we not be willing to trust him? We put our worldly affairs and interests into the hands of men and feel that they are safe. We commit our sicknesses to the skill of our physician. Business complications we confide to the wisdom of our lawyer.

A broken machine we turn over to a mechanic. Is not God wise enough to manage the complications of our lives and to bring order and beauty out of them? Has he not skill enough? Is he not our Father? and will he not always do the very best and wisest thing for us? Should we not trust him and cease to be anxious about anything that we have committed to him? Is not anxiety doubt? and is not doubt sin? We are to commit our way to the Lord, trust him and be at peace.

The only thing that concerns us is our duty. God will weave the web into patterns of beauty unless by our follies and sins we mar it. But we must not hurry him. His plans are sometimes very long, and our impatience may mar them, as well as our sins. The buds of his purposes must not be torn open. We must wait till his fingers unfold them.

"God's plans, like lilies pure and white, unfold:
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart;
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.
And if, through patient toil, we reach the land
Where tired feet, with sandals loose, may rest,
Where we shall clearly know and understand,
I think that we will say, 'God knew the best.'"

VI.

GLIMPSES AT LIFE'S WINDOWS.

NO one can ponder the great theme of immortality for an hour and not feel the stir and glow of a better, nobler life in him. In our more prosaic moods we are like men shut up in a narrow cell. We see for the time nothing but the little patch of dusty floor at our feet and the cold, cheerless walls that encircle us. We are occupied with our little round of duties. Burdens press, sorrows pour bitter tears into our cup, our hopes are shattered; or we have our short-lived joys, we see our plans succeed, and play at living like children in their mimic fancies. Now and then we have intimations of a wider and more glorious world outside our walls, stretching away beyond the small circle in which we dwell. Faint voices appear to come to us from without. Or there are glimmerings as if of memory, like the visionary gleams of a past, and forgotten life, which flash

before us in our higher moods. In these rare moments we seem to realize the meaning of the poet's sublime thought:

> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar;
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
> From God, who is our home."

But to most of us pent up in this earthly life these are only merest intimations, faintest whispers, dreamlike suggestions. We go on living in our narrow sphere, oppressed by its limitations, our faculties and powers stunted by its gloom.

Did you ever climb the winding staircase in the interior of some great monument or tower? At intervals, as you ascended, you came to a window which let in a little light, and through which, as you looked out, you had a glimpse of a great expanse of fair and lovely world outside the dark tower. You saw green fields, rich gardens, picturesque landscapes, streams flashing like flowing silver in the sunshine, the blue sea yonder, and far away, on the other hand, the shadowy forms of great mountains. How little, how dark, how poor

and cheerless, seemed the close, narrow limits of your staircase as you looked out upon the illimitable view that stretched from your window!

Life in this world is like the ascent of such a column. But while we climb heavily and wearily up its steep, dark stairway, there lies, outside the thick walls, a glorious world reaching away into eternity, beautiful and filled with the rarest things of God's love. And thoughts of immortality, when they come to us, are little windows through which we have glimpses of the infinite sweep and stretch of life beyond this hampered, broken, fragmentary existence of earth.

The doctrine of the resurrection is one of these windows. It opens to us a vista running away beyond the grave. Death is a mere episode, a mere experience, an incident on the way. Even the grave, which seems to quench all the light of life, is but a chamber in which we shall disrobe ourselves of the infirmities, blemishes and imperfections of mortality and be reclothed in the holy, spotless vesture of immortality. Thus we sleep at night, and sleep seems like death; but we awake in the morning, our life unharmed, unwasted, made fairer, fuller, fresher, stronger. Winter comes, and the leaves fall, the flowers fade, the plants die

and snow wraps the earth in a blanket of death. But spring comes again, and the buds burst out anew, the flowers lift their heads and the grasses shoot up once more. From beneath the great drifts the gentlest and most delicate forms of life come as fresh and fragrant as if they had been nourished in a conservatory. Nature rises from the grave of winter in new beauty and luxuriance. In place of the sere leaves and faded loveliness and exhausted vigor of the autumn, there is now all the splendor of new creation. Every leaf is green, every pore is flowing full of vital sap, and every flower pours sweetest fragrance on the air.

The grave is but life's winter, from whose darkness and chill we shall come with unwasted beauty. Then, away beyond this strange experience, as we look out at the window again, we see life going on, expanding, deepening, enriching.

When the truth of immortal existence comes into our personal consciousness, it opens a wonderful vista before us. It gives life a new glory. It furnishes one of the most powerful motives for noble living.

The weakness of most lives, even of most Christian lives, is the absence of this motive. For, however firmly we may cling to the truth of im-

mortality as a belief, there are but few lives in which it is so realized as to be a ruling inspiration, a strong, masterful conviction. How it would widen out all our thoughts, conceptions, hopes and plans if the walls that divide life here and hereafter were broken down and our eyes could see our own existence in perspective, stretching away into eternity, as real, as personal, as fraught with interest beyond the grave as on this side of it! How it would lift up, dignify, ennoble, inspire, awaken and deepen all our life if we could but hold the truth of personal immortality in our consciousness all the while as vividly and as really as we hold to-morrow!

The grave would not then be the end of anything save of mortality and of the sins, weights and infirmities which belong to this earthly state. It would break up no plans. It would cut off nothing. If we see life only as a narrow stage bounded by the curtain that falls at death, ending there for ever, how poor and little and limited does existence appear! We can have no plans that require more than earth's brief day for their completion. We can start no work that cannot be finished before the end comes. We may cherish no joys that will reach over into the life hereafter.

We may sow no seeds that will not come to harvest this side of the grave. Our souls may be thrilled by no aspirations and hopes that have their goal beyond the shadows. But how different if we see life with the veil torn away! The future is as much in our vision and as real as the little present. We may begin works here which shall require ten thousand years to complete. There is no hurry, for we shall have all eternity in which to work. We may scatter seeds which we know shall not come to harvest for long ages. We may cherish hopes and aspirations whose goals lie far away in the life to come. We may endure sacrifices, hardships and toils which cannot bring any recompense or reward in this world, knowing that in the long yearless future we shall find glorious return.

Life may seem a failure here, crushed like a lily under the heel of wrong or sin, broken, trampled, torn. But it may yet become a glorious success. Many of the truest and best of God's children know only defeat in this world. They are evermore beaten back and thrust down. The burdens are too heavy for them. They are overmastered by sorrows. The world's enmity treads them in the dust. They are not worldly-wise, and while

others march by to great earthly success they live obscurely, oppressed, cheated, wronged, and lie buried away in the darkness of failure. If the vista did not reach beyond the bare and cold room in which these unsuccessful ones breathe their last, we might drop a tear of pity over their sad story of defeat. But when the curtain is lifted and we see millions of years of existence for them on the other side, we dry our tears. There will be time enough for them to retrieve the failure of earth. Through the love and grace of Christ, the defeated Christian life that goes out in the darkness here may be restored to beauty and power, and in the long ages beyond death may realize all the hopes that seemed utterly wrecked in this world.

Indeed, it may be that those who have failed here, as men phrase it, are the very ones who shall win the highest success in the after-life if they have kept their garments clean amid the struggles and toils. It has been said that heaven is probably a place for those who have failed on earth—for the

> "Delicate spirits pushed away
> In the hot press of the noonday."

Certainly, for the Christian, the realization of the truth of immortality takes away the bitterness of

earthly defeat. There will be time enough for victory and for the most glorious success in the unending eternity.

There are lives that are cut off here before any of their powers are developed. A thousand hopes cluster about them. Dreams of greatness or of beauty fill the visions of loving friends. Then suddenly they are stricken down in the dim dawn or the early morning. The bud had not time to open out its beauties in the short summer of earthly existence. It is borne away still folding up in its close-shut calyxes all its germs and possibilities of power, loveliness and life. Sorrow weeps bitterly over the hopes that seem blighted and cuts its symbols of incompleteness upon the marble; and yet, with the warmth of immortality pressing up against the gates, what matters it that the bud did not open here and unfold its beauties this side the grave? There will be time enough in heaven's long summer for every life to put out all its loveliness and glory. No hopes are blighted that are only carried forward into the immortal years. No life is incomplete because it is cut off too soon to ripen, in an earthly home, into majesty of form and glory of fruitage; for death does not come to the Christian as a destroyer. It dims no splendor.

It blots out no beauty. It paralyzes no power. It blights no bud or germ. It only takes out of life whatever is dull, earthly and opaque, whatever is corrupt and mortal, and leaves it pure, brilliant, glorious.

> "Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly;
> Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
> Stains the white radiance of eternity,
> Until death tramples it to fragments."

Death only sweeps away the limitations, breaks down the walls, shatters the crust of mortality, washes out the stains, and then life expands into perfect freedom, fullness, joy and power. The translation of a Christian life from earth to heaven is but like the removal of a tender plant from a cold northern garden, where it is stunted and dying, into a tropical field, where it puts out most luxuriant growths and covers itself with splendor.

There ought to be wondrous comforting power in the truth of immortality for those who carry here the burdens of sickness, infirmity or deformity; and there are many such. Many lovely bodies are full of disease; they stagger under life's lightest burdens. Then there are many who carry imperfect bodies, and old age comes to the strongest and the fairest, stealing away the strength and touch-

ing the loveliness, and it fades. But the resurrection body will be for ever free from disease and pain. There will be no decrepitude, no bowed forms, no pale cheeks, no wasting or decay. How pleasant it is to the old to know that they will get back their bodies with all the marks of age removed, and will begin life again with all the glow of immortal youth! I believe it is Swedenborg who says that in heaven the oldest angels are the youngest. A deep truth lies here. Not only does age leave no marks or traces of wasting, but the immortal life is a growth ever toward youth and freshness of existence rather than toward senescence and decay.

There is another bearing which the truth of immortality must have upon the life that truly realizes it. It is in the intensifying of all its best activities and powers. If there were to be no life after this brief existence, why should we deny ourselves and spend our strength in serving others? Why should we sacrifice our own ease and comfort for the sake of those who are degraded and unworthy? How cold and hard all duty seems without this motive! But when this truth of immortality comes and touches these austere duties, how they begin to glow! The certainty of a hereafter bright

with all manner of rewards and joys is a wondrous inspiration. No matter that there is no apparent result when we toil and sacrifice; that the word we speak seems to float away into oblivion; that the impression we seek to make on a life fades out while we gaze. Somewhere in the long years to come we shall find that not the smallest deed done for Christ, or the feeblest word spoken, or the faintest touch given, has been in vain. In the highest sense—higher than the old artist dreamed of—do we work for eternity. In a truer and deeper way than we know, and in remoter ages than we can count, shall we find our songs from beginning to end in the hearts of our friends. In frescoing, when the artist lays on his colors they sink away and leave no trace, but they reappear by and by in beauty. So we touch lives to-day and there is no impression that we can see. The very memory seems to fade out. But in eternity it will be manifest. The brightest clouds in the glowing west lose their splendor while you gaze, but work done in human souls will appear in unfading hues, brightening for ever.

Thus the glimpses we get through the little dim windows in the walls of our earthly life should give a new meaning to our existence here and to

all our multiplied relationships. With immortality glowing before us, our brief years on earth should be marked by earnestness, reverence, love and faithfulness. Soon we shall break out of our narrow circle and traverse the boundless fields that we see now only in the far-away and momentary glimpse. But it will be a blessed thing if we can get into our hearts even here something of the personal consciousness of our immortality, with its limitless possessions and possibilities, and feel something in our souls of the power of an endless life.

VII.

THE MARRIAGE ALTAR, AND AFTER.

"In the long years liker must they grow:
The man be more of woman, she of man:
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care:
Move as the double-natured poet each
Till at the last she set herself to man
Like perfect music unto noble words."—LONGFELLOW.

THE preparations are all at last made. The bridal trousseau is completed. The day has been fixed. The cards have gone out. The hour comes. Two young hearts are throbbing with love and joy. A brilliant company, music, flowers, a solemn hush as the happy pair approach the altar, the repetition of the sacred words of the marriage ceremony, the clasping of hands, the mutual covenants and promises, the giving and receiving of the ring, the final "Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," the prayer and benediction,—and they twain are one flesh. There

are tears and congratulations, hurried good-byes, a bridal tour, and a new bark puts out upon the sea freighted with high hopes. God grant it may never be dashed upon any hidden rock and wrecked!

Marriage is very like the bringing together of two instruments of music. The first thing is to get them keyed to the same pitch. Before a concert begins you hear the musicians striking chords and keying their instruments, until at length they all perfectly accord. Then they come out and play some rare piece of music without a discord or a jar in any of its parts.

No two lives, however thorough their former acquaintance may have been, however long they may have moved together in society or mingled in the closer and more intimate relations of a ripening friendship, ever find themselves perfectly in harmony on their marriage-day. It is only when that mysterious blending begins after marriage which no language can explain that each finds so much in the other that was never discovered before. There are beauties and excellences that were never disclosed, even to love's partial eye, in all the days of familiar intimacy. There are peculiarities which were never seen to exist until they began to make

themselves manifest within the veil of the matrimonial temple. There are incompatibilities that were never dreamed of till they were revealed in the attrition of domestic life. There are faults which neither even suspected in the temper and habits of the other.

Before marriage young people are on their good behavior. They do not exhibit their infirmities. Selfishness is hidden under garments of courtesy and gallantry. Each forgets self in romantic devotion to the other. The voice is softened and made tender, and even tremulous, by love. The music flows with a holy rhythm mellowed by affection's gentleness. Everything that would make an unfavorable impression is scrupulously put under lock and key. So there is harmony of no ordinary sweetness made by the two young lives, unvexed by one discordant note.

Marriage is a great mystery. "They twain shall be one flesh" is no mere figure of speech. Years of closest, most familiar, most unrestrained intimacy bring lives very close together, but there is still a separating wall which marriage breaks down. The two lives become one. Each opens every nook, every chamber, every cranny, to the other. There is a mutual interflow, life pouring into life

There may have been no intention on the part of either to deceive the other in the smallest matter or to cloak the smallest infirmity. But the disclosure could not, in the very nature of things, have been any more perfect. Each stood in the vestibule of a house, or at the most sat in its parlor, never entering any other apartment. Now the whole house is thrown open, and many hitherto unsuspected things are seen.

Too often the restraint seems to fall off when the matrimonial chain is riveted. No effort is longer made to curb the bad tempers and evil propensities. The delicate robe of politeness is torn away, and many a rudeness appears. It seems to be considered no longer necessary to continue the old thoughtfulness. Selfishness begins to assert itself. The sweet amenities of the wooing-days are laid aside, and the result is unhappiness. Many a young bride cries herself sick half a score of times before she has been a month a bride, and wishes she were back in the bright, happy home of her youth. Oftentimes both the newly-wedded pair become discouraged and think in their hearts that they have made a mistake.

And yet there is really no reason for discouragement. The marriage may yet be made happy.

There is need only for large and wise patience. The two lives require only to be brought into harmony, and love's sweetest music will flow from two hearts in tender unison. But there are several rules which must always be remembered and observed.

Why, for instance, should either party, after the wedding-day, cease to observe all the sweet courtesies, little refinements and charming amenities of the courtship-days? Why should a man be polite all day to every one he meets—even to the porter in his store, and the bootblack or newsboy on the street—and then less polite to her who meets him at his door with yearning heart hungry for expressions of love? If things have gone wrong with him all day, why should he carry his gloom to his home to darken the joy of his wife's tender heart? Or why should the woman who used to be all smiles and beauty and adornment and perfume when her lover came, meet her husband now with disheveled hair, soiled dress, slatternly manner and face all frowns? Why should there not be a resolute continuance of the old politeness and mutual desire to please which made the wooing-days so sunny?

Then love must be lifted up out of the realm

of the passions and senses and spiritualized. There should be converse on the higher themes of life. Many persons are married only at one or two points. Their natures know but the lower forms of pleasure and fellowship. They never commune on any topic but the most earthy. Their intellectual parts have no fellowship. They never read nor converse together on elevated themes. There is no commingling of mind with mind: they are dead to each other in that higher region. Then still fewer are wedded in their highest, their spiritual natures. The number is small of those who commune together concerning the things of God, the soul's holiest interests and the realities of eternity. No marriage is complete which does not unite and blend the wedded lives at every point. Husband and wife should be such along their whole nature.

This implies that they should read and study together, having the same line of thought, helping each other toward higher mental culture. It implies also that they should worship together, communing with one another upon the holiest themes of life and hope. Together they should bow in prayer, and together work in anticipation of the same blessed home beyond this life

of toil and care. I can conceive of no true and perfect marriage whose deepest joy does not lie forward in the life to come.

Perfect mutual confidence is an element of every complete marriage. Husband and wife should live but one life, sharing all of each other's cares, joys, sorrows and hopes. There should not be a corner in the nature and occupation of either which is not open to the other. The moment a man has to begin to shut his wife out from any chapters of his daily life he is in peril, and in like manner her whole life should be open to him. There should be a flowing together of heart and soul in close communion and perfect confidence. No discord can end in harm while there is such mutual intersphering of lives and such interflowing of souls.

Once more, no third party should ever be taken into this holy of holies. No matter who it is—the sweetest, gentlest, dearest, wisest mother, the purest, truest, tenderest sister, the best, the loyalest friend—no one but God should ever be permitted to know aught of the secret, sacred married life that they twain are living. This is one of those relations with which no stranger, though he be the closest bosom friend, should intermeddle. Any alien touch is sure to leave a blight.

There are certain influences that bring out all the warmth and tenderness needed to make any marriage very happy. When one is sick, how gentle and thoughtful it makes the other! Not a want or wish is left unsupplied. All the heart's affections—long slumbering, perhaps—are awakened and become intent on most kindly ministry. No service is thought a hardship now or done with any show of reluctance. There is not a breath or look of impatience. Love flows out in tone and look and word and act. There is an inexpressible tenderness in all the bearing. Even the coldest natures become gentle in the sick-room, and the rudest, harshest manners become soft and warm at the touch of suffering in the beloved one. Or let death come to either, and what an awakening there is of all that is holiest and tenderest and sweetest in the heart of the other! If the dead could be recalled and the wedded life resumed, would it not be a thousand times more loving than ever it was before? Would there be any more the old impatience, the old selfishness? Would there not be the fullest sympathy, the largest forbearance, the warmest outflow of the heart's most kindly feelings?

And why may not married life be lived day by

day under the power of this wondrous influence? Why wait for suffering in the one we love to thaw out the heart's tenderness, to melt the icy chill of neglect and indifference, and to produce in us the summer fruits of affection? Why wait for death to come to reveal the beauty of the plain and homely life that moves by our side and disclose the value of the blessings it enfolds for us? Why should we only learn to appreciate and prize love's splendors and its sweetness as it vanishes out of our sight? Very sadly—and yet how truthfully!—has one sung:

"And she is gone, sweet human love is gone!
'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you and lie down at night by you,
Who care not for their presence—muse or sleep;
And all at once they leave you. Then you know them!
We are so fooled, so cheated!"

But why should the empty chair be the first revealer of the real worth of those who have walked so close to us? Why should sorrow over our loss be the first influence to draw from our hearts the tenderness and the wealth of kindly ministries that lie pent up in them all the while? Surely, wedded life should call out all that is richest, truest, tenderest, most inspiring and most helpful in the life

of each. This is the true ideal of Christian marriage. Its love is to be like that of Christ and his Church. It should not wait for the agony of suffering or the pang of separation to draw out its tenderness, but should fill all its days and nights with unvexed sweetness.

There are many such marriages. Few more beautiful pictures of wedded love were ever unveiled than that which was lived out in the home of Charles Kingsley. His wife closes her loving memoir with these words: "The outside world must judge him as an author, a preacher, a member of society, but those only who lived with him in the intimacy of every-day life at home can tell what he was as a man. Over the real romance of his life and over the tenderest, loveliest passages in his private letters a veil must be thrown, but it will not be lifting it too far to say that if in the highest, closest of earthly relationships a love that never failed—pure, patient, passionate—for six-and-thirty years, a love which never stooped from its own lofty level to a hasty word, an impatient gesture or a selfish act, in sickness or in health, in sunshine or in storm, by day or by night, could prove that the age of chivalry has not passed away for ever, then Charles Kingsley fulfilled the ideal

of a 'most true and perfect knight' to the one woman blest with that love in time and to eternity. To eternity, for such love is eternal, and he is not dead. He himself, the man, the lover, husband, father, friend—he still lives in God, who is not the God of the dead, but of the living." And why should not every marriage in Christ realize all that lies in this picture? It is possible, and yet only noble manhood and womanhood, with truest views of marriage and inspired by the holiest love, can realize it.

VIII.

RELIGION IN THE HOME.

"Sweet are the joys of home,
And pure as sweet; for they,
Like dews of morn and evening, come
To make and close the day."

MUCH is said and written of religion in the home, and yet it may be that there is not always a clear conception of the meaning of the term. It is sometimes supposed that the requirement is fully met when family devotions are regularly maintained. This is of vital importance. Household religion certainly implies the daily family worship. I cannot think that any home realizes the true ideal or can have Heaven's richest benedictions upon it in which this is omitted or neglected. God blesses and shelters the household in which he is honored. Prayer weaves a roof of love over the home and builds walls of protection about it.

Surely the goodness of a thoughtful Providence,

received day after day in unbroken continuity, requires some grateful recognition of praise. Then is it not a perilous thing for the members of the household to disperse in the morning to their duties and responsibilities, into dangers and temptations, to meet possible trials, without the invoking of Heaven's guidance, protection and help? There is reason to fear that in many homes family worship is neglected, and that in the intense whirl and excitement of these busy times the neglect is becoming more and more common. How can we expect God's blessing upon our homes if we do not call upon his name? Is it any wonder that there is sorrow over children's wanderings in the households in which there is no family altar?

There is a wondrous educating influence in the daily assemblage of the family for prayer. Where through childhood and youth the custom has been regularly maintained, its influence over the life is such as can never be wholly obliterated. And it may be seriously questioned whether in any other way, by any other means, children can be so firmly

"Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

The memories of the old family altar, waked years and years after the home walls had crumbled

and the home voices had become silent, have led many a wanderer back to God's feet.

Then there is nothing else that so sweetens the home-life. True family worship is a fountain that brings streams of holy influences into every part of the household. It is a vase of perfume that sheds fragrance over all. It softens asperities. It quells anger. It quiets impatience. It settles differences. It subdues evil passions. Hearts that are drawn together at God's feet every day cannot get very far apart. The frictions of the day are forgotten when all voices mingle in the same heavenly song. As the tender words of inspiration fall with their benign counsels all feeling of unkindness melts away. The altar in the midst wondrously hallows and sweetens the home fellowship. Besides, it puts new strength into every heart. It comforts sorrow. It is a shield against temptation. It smoothes out the wrinkles of care. It inspires strength for burden-bearing. It quickens every religious sentiment and keeps the fires burning on every heart's altar.

The manner in which the family worship is conducted is very important. It should be made so pleasant as to be looked forward to with gladness even by the youngest children. Too often it is

made tedious, monotonous or burdensome. Men fall into a stereotyped order which they never vary. Long passages are read, and the prayers offered are not only long, but are the same every day from year to year, with no adaptation to the home-life, or to the capacities of children. There is no reason why the family worship should not be the most delightful exercise in the home-life. It should be the continual study of heads of households to make it bright, interesting and profitable. To make it dull and irksome is treason to true religion. It is impossible to give more than the merest suggestions and hints as to methods. A part in the service should be given to each child. Questions may be asked each day on the passage read the day before. Incidents may be introduced to illustrate the lesson. Hard words may be explained. One practical thought at least may be selected from the Scripture read which will bear upon the day's life. Cheerful songs may be sung. Then in the prayer some part should be given to the little ones. Sometimes it is good to have all follow in the prayer, repeating it phrase after phrase. And all may unite in the Lord's Prayer at the close. When there are quite young children in the family, it may not be best to read the Bible in course, but

to select portions in which they will be easily interested. For an exercise so sacred and fraught with such influences it is not too much to say that the most careful preparation should be made. It is probable that there are few duties for which so little preparation is actually made. If thought were given to this matter beforehand, the exercise need never be dull or wearisome. The passage may not only be selected, but studied and some point fixed upon for practical enforcement. A bright incident or little story may be ready to help to fix the lesson. The prayer may be thought over or even written out. A few minutes given every day to preparation for family worship will serve to make it, as it should be, the most pleasant and attractive incident of the day.

But while family religion implies regular devotions, there is something else required. There are homes in which family worship is never neglected in which there is yet a painful absence of home religion. Religion is love, and a religious home is one in which love reigns. There must be love in action, love that flows out in all the home intercourse, showing itself in a thousand little expressions of thoughtfulness, kindness, unselfishness and gentle courtesy. There are homes in which there

is truest love. The members of the household would give their lives for each other. When grief or pain comes to any one of them, the hearts of all the others are touched and at once go out in deepest sympathy, in warmest expressions of affection and in self-forgetful ministries. There is no question as to the reality and the strength of the attachment that mutually exists between the hearts of the household. And yet in their ordinary associations there is a great lack of those exhibitions of kindly feeling which are the sweetest charm of love. There is a lack of tender words. Husband and wife pass week after week without one harsh word, it may be, but also without one of those endearing expressions such as made their early love-days so sunny and radiant. And the intercourse of the whole household is characterized by the same lack of warmth and tenderness. The conversation is about the most commonplace matters, is often constrained, and in many cases consists only of occasional monosyllables. Many a meal is eaten almost in silence. The tone of the home-life is cold. All sentiment is avoided, no compliments are uttered. Even the simplest courtesies of manner are often neglected. Favors are asked, given and accepted without one of those sweetening graces of

politeness which we are all so careful to observe in our intercourse with strangers, and which add so much to the pleasure of such intercourse.

Sorrow falls upon one of the family, and immediately all is changed. The coldness of manner passes into tenderness. This proves the reality and power of the family bond. But ought the love to be so locked up and hidden away in the crannies of the heart and in the inner recesses of the nature as to require affliction or sorrow to call it out? Should not love celebrate its sweetest summer all the while in the home? Should it require calamity or pain to woo out its fragrance and its beauty?

What a wondrous charm it gives to family-life when all the members let their hearts' love flow out in all those tender graces of expression which have so much power to give joy! There are such homes. The very atmosphere, as you enter the door, seems laden with fragrance. The rarest courtesy marks all the intercourse of the family. Each one is thoughtful of the other's comfort and pleasure. No harsh word is spoken. The conversation at table flows on in musical sweetness, bright, sparkling and cheerful, without one jar. There is no sullen look on any face. There is no

disregard of politeness. There is no laying aside of good manners.

But there are many who are amiable and polite away from home who are not so in the sacredness of their own household. There are men who in society are courteous, thoughtful and gracious who when they enter their own doors become gruff, moody, and even rude. There are ladies who are the brightest charm of the social circle, sunny, sparkling, thoughtful, who as they cross their own thresholds are suddenly transformed, becoming disagreeable, petulant, impatient, irritable and unlovely. Some of the most brilliant lights of society are the most unendurable at home. They keep their courtly manners for company, and relapse into barbarism when in the shelter of their own roof-tree. They have "careful thought for the stranger," but for their "own the bitter tone."

Now, it need not be said that the most unbroken continuity in family devotions will not make such home-life religious. A true Christian home is one in whose holy circle all live the religion of Christ. We should be just as sunny inside our own doors as on the street. Courtesy that changes to rudeness when we cross our own threshold is no courtesy at all. Love that beareth all things, endureth

all things and seeketh not its own must not turn to petulance and selfishness at home. We should appear always at our best among those we love the best. We ought to bring the sweetest things of our hearts into our homes.

Yet there are tendencies to careless living at home against which we need to guard ourselves very carefully. Sacred as are the home relationships, our very familiarity with them is apt to render us forgetful. Incessant repetitions of impressions of any kind are in danger of producing callousness of sensibility. In the constant contact of the home-loves lies the danger that we become heedless of them. It takes special care and watchfulness and continual quickening of the affections to keep our hearts' sensibilities always alive to the unbroken touch of the tender relationships of home. Then outside we have to be ever on our guard. The world has no patience with our ill-temper and bad manners. A moment's petulance, a single gruff reply or uncivil word, or the want of courtesy in the smallest thing, may cost us a friend or lose us a customer or mar our reputation. Hence we have the constant pressure of these selfish motives to compel us to appear always at our best in society.

But at home this pressure is removed. We are sure of the hearts there. They have patience with us. Their love is not of the fickle and uncertain kind that requires continuous propitiation. We have no fear of losing their esteem or regard. In our heedless selfishness we are in constant danger, when we enter the home-shelter after the stress of the day, of removing the restraint and permitting our least amiable self to come to the outside.

There is still another reason why peculiar watchfulness over the home-behavior is necessary. In the outside world the contact of life with life is usually at a reasonable distance. We do not get very close to men. We see only their best points. We meet them only in favorable circumstances, and are not compelled to endure the friction of actual contact with their meaner qualities. But that which makes home-intercourse the sorest test of piety and of character is its closeness. Lives touch there at every point. The very unrestraint, laying all lives bare to each other, adds immeasurably to the danger of friction. Nothing but the religion of Christ, the love that endureth all things, is equal to the strain of such experiences.

IX.

THE MINISTRY OF SORROW.

"'Tis sorrow builds the shining ladder up
Whose golden rounds are our calamities,
Whereon, our firm feet planting, nearer God
The spirit climbs and hath its eyes unsealed."

A BOOK that treats even fragmentarily of Christian culture would be incomplete without a chapter on the ministry of sorrow, for this is an experience through which sooner or later every life must pass. It is part of the earthly education for the heavenly glory. Our Lord himself passed this way before us and was made perfect through suffering, and it is also ordained for us, his followers, that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of heaven.

They are only the very young who know nothing as yet of the liturgy of grief. To them the language of sorrow is an unknown tongue, and the consolations of the Scriptures seem written in pale or invisible ink. But it will not long be so. The

years will bring griefs to them, and under their hot flames the comforts of religion will glow upon the inspired page as no other words do. The railway-officials passed through our train at midday and lighted the lamps. The passengers could not understand why it was done. How pale the lights seemed in the blaze of noon! But soon we plunged into a long tunnel, into pitchy darkness. How brightly then the beams shone down upon us! and how grateful we all were for the lamps! So the lamps of comfort which God hangs about our hearts in our sunny youth, and which seem to us so dim and so without a purpose while there is no break in our joy, will burst into heavenly brightness when the darkness thickens about us. What shall we then do if none of these lamps of consolation are ready lighted in our hearts?

The ministries of sorrow for the Christian are manifold. Blighting the joys of earth on which he had set his heart, it turns his eye toward the things that are unseen and eternal. There are many who never saw Christ until the light of some tender beauty faded before them, and, looking up in the darkness, they beheld that blessed face beaming down upon them in divine gentleness and love.

"Through the clouded glass
Of our own bitter tears we learn to look
Undazzled on the kindness of God's face:
Earth is too dark, and heaven alone shines through."

Many of the sweetest joys of Christian hearts are songs which have been learned in the bitterness of trial. A story is told of "a little bird that will never learn to sing the song his master will have him sing while his cage is full of light. He listens and learns a snatch of this, a trill of that, a polyglot of all the songs in the grove, but never a separate and entire melody of his own. But the master covers his cage and makes it dark all about him, and then he listens and listens to the one song he is to sing, and tries and tries, and tries again, until at last his heart is full of it. And then, when he has caught the melody, the cage is uncovered, and he sings it sweetly ever after in the light."

It is often with our hearts as with the bird. The Master has a song to teach us, but we learn only a strain of it, a note here and there, while we catch up snatches of earth's music, the world's songs, and sing them with it. Then he comes and makes it dark about us till we learn the sweet song he would teach us. And, having once learned it in the deep shadows, we continue to sing it afterward,

even in the brightest day of earthly joy. Many of the loveliest songs of peace and trust and hope which God's children sing in this world they have been taught in the hushed and darkened chambers of sorrow.

In like manner, many of the rarest beauties of character are touches given by the divine Spirit in the hours of affliction. Many a Christian enters a sore trial, cold, worldly, unspiritual, with all the better and more tender qualities of his nature locked up in his heart like the beauty and fragrance in the bare and jagged tree in January; but he comes out of it with gentle spirit, mellowed, richened and sweetened, and with all the fragrant graces pouring their perfume about him. The photographer carries his picture back into a darkened room that he may bring out its features. The light would mar his delicate work. God brings out in many a soul its loveliest beauties while the curtain is drawn and the light of day shut out. The darkness does not tell of anger: it is only the shadow of the wing of divine love folded close over us for a little, while the Master adds some new touch of loveliness to the picture he is bringing out in our souls.

Afflictions, sanctified, soften the asperities of

life. They tame the wildness of nature. They temper human ambitions. They burn out the dross of selfishness and worldliness. They humble pride. They quell fierce passions. They reveal to men their own hearts, their own weaknesses, faults, blemishes and perils. They teach patience and submission. They disciple unruly spirits. They deepen and enrich our experiences. Ploughing the hard soil and cutting long and deep furrows in the heart, the heavenly Sower follows, and fruits of righteousness spring up. It has been said that "the last, best fruit which comes to late perfection, even in the kindliest soul, is tenderness toward the hard, forbearance toward the unforbearing, warmth of heart toward the cold, and philanthropy toward the misanthropic." But there is no influence under which these late fruits ripen so quickly as under the power of sorrow. It makes us gentle toward all. It softens every harsh feeling and fills the heart with tender sympathy, kindly charity and benevolent dispositions. Many a home is saved from wreck by a sorrow that comes and draws estranged hearts close together again. Many a cold, icy nature is made warm and tender by the grief that crushes it.

Then sorrow cuts the chains that bind us to this

earthly life and sends us out to sea on voyages of new discovery. It opens windows in our poor prison-life here through which we get glimpses of the better things of immortality and glory.

Especially is this true of the loss of friends by death. We live absorbed in the earthly life about us, thinking of no other, our eyes fixed on the dusty soil at our feet and not seeing the radiant heavens that glow and shine above our heads. Then suddenly one whom we love is plucked away from our side, and for the first time we begin to look up and to obtain glimpses of the invisible and eternal things of the life above and beyond us. Thus viewed from any side, affliction appears as a messenger of God sent to minister to us in the truest way. As one has beautifully written of sorrow,

"I turned and clasped her close with sudden strength,
And slowly, sweetly, I became aware
Within my arms God's angel stood at length,
White-robed and calm and fair.
'Look thou beyond the evening sky,' she said,
'Beyond the changing splendors of the day,
Accept the pain, the weariness, the dread—
Accept, and bid me stay.'"

God is the Comforter. He has put up the bowers and opened the springs of comfort in al-

most every page of his word. At the head of almost every chapter an angel seems to stand crying, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." There is no darkness that gathers about any of God's children into which he does not send some beams of brightness.

One dark and dreary winter day I sat in my study thinking what I should say to my people on the Sabbath. The sky had been heavily overcast all the morning. But suddenly there was a little rift in the clouds, and a few sunbeams fell on my window. As the brightness flowed in I raised my eyes, and there, on the wall, was a little bit of as glorious rainbow as ever I saw. There was some peculiar formation in the glass of the window-pane which acted as a perfect prism, disentangling and unsnarling the white beam and spreading its brilliant threads in rich display upon the plastered wall of the room. So there is no life of Christian disciple, however dark and full of cares and grief, into which God does not at some hour of each day pour a little at least of the splendor of heaven. The trouble is that we shut our eyes to the comfort and will not look upon it. We see all the clouds and sit in the darkness, beholding not the sunbeams and the bits of rainbow that our Fa-

ther sends into our lives to brighten and illumine them.

There is a picture of a woman seated on the low rocks, looking out upon a wild sea down into which the treasures of her heart have gone. Her face is stony with hopeless, despairing grief. Almost touching the black robe of the mourner, hovering over her shoulder, is the shadowy form of an angel softly touching the strings of a harp. But she is unaware of the angel's nearness, nor does she hear a note of the celestial music. She bows in dumb unconsciousness, with breaking heart and unsoothed sorrow, while the heavenly consolation is so close. Thus many of God's children sit in darkness, crushed by their sorrows, yearning for comfort and for an assurance of the divine love and sympathy, hearing no soft music, no whisper of consolation, while close beside them the Master himself stands unperceived, and heaven's sweetest songs float unheard in the very air they breathe. It is a simpler faith we need to take the consolation our Father sends when our hearts are breaking.

There is no comfort like the fact of God's infinite, unchanging and eternal love for us. If we can but get this truth into our individual consciousness, it will sustain us in every trial. All the uni-

verse is under his personal sway, and he is our tenderest and dearest Friend, carrying each one of us close in his heart. Providence is not merely the outworking of a mechanical system or the beneficent operation of wise and good laws. It is rather the thoughtful, sleepless, loving care of our Father. We put God too far off. There are laws of Nature, but he is the Lawmaker, and these laws are but the methods of his kindness. They do not make any gulf between him and his children. In every well-ordered household there are regulations, rules, habits, laws, but these do not make the home-providence any less due to the love and kindness of the parents. No more do Nature's established and uniform laws cut us off from the personal care of God. He comes near to us perpetually in these methods of his providence. His own fingers touch the tints in the flower. With his own hand he feeds the birds, and in all second causes it is still his hand that works. The beautiful things we see are the pictures our Father has hung up in our chamber to give us pleasure. The good things we receive are the ever-fresh tokens of his thoughtful love for us.

And the same is true of the evil and painful things. Our Father sent them. They seem to

mean harm. But he loves us with a love deep, tender and eternal. We cannot see how these things consist with love's plan, but we know that they must; and in this faith we may rest, not understanding, but yet undoubting, unquestioning and unfearing.

"If we could push ajar the gates of life,
And stand within and all God's workings see,
We could interpret all this doubt and strife,
And for each mystery could find a key."

But this we cannot do. Hereafter we shall know. Yet even now, knowing what we do of God's wise and eternal love for us, we can believe and trust and be at peace. This is the truest comfort. It is the clasp of the tree's roots upon the immutable rock. It is the soul's clinging to God in the storm.

A tourist writes of stopping at Giesbach to look at the wonders of its waterfalls. The party had to pass over one of the falls on a slender bridge through the drenching water, with the wild torrents dashing beneath. It was a trying experience. But once through a glorious picture burst upon them. There were rainbows above, beneath and circling on all sides. So the spray of sorrow falls now, and we may have to walk through floods and

pitiless torrents, and all may seem a strange, inexplicable mystery. But there will come a time when we shall have passed through these showers of grief, and when we shall stand amid the splendor of rainbows on the shores of glory. Then we will understand, and see love in every pang and tear.

X.

AS UNTO THE LORD.

"I must pray to God that somebody else may do whatever I leave undone. But I shall not have any right to that prayer unless I do my duty wherever I see it."—EDWARD GARRETT.

A GREAT deal is said in the Scriptures about serving the Lord. But how are we to serve him? What kind of work comes under the head of service? There are wrong impressions regarding this. All suppose that they are serving the Lord when they engage in specifically religious exercises. After his day's work a man goes to a prayer-meeting. He regards that as serving, but does not think of calling his long day's secular work by the same sweet designation. A woman visits a sick neighbor in the afternoon, reads a few passages and bows in prayer at her bedside. She feels as she turns away that the Lord accepts that as service, but she does not dare to think of her long morning's work at home in burdensome household duties or among her children, mending,

patching, teaching, comforting, as of the same sacred character.

And yet it is possible for us to do the simplest, most prosaic of these things in such a way as to render acceptable service to the Lord. The question, then, arises, How are we to perform these common secular duties so as to make them pleasing to Christ as ministries to him?

First of all, our lives must be truly consecrated to Christ. If they are not, the most magnificent services will not be accepted. Then the work we do must be the work to which he calls us at the time. Something else than our present duty, though requiring more toil and appearing more splendid, will not be pleasing while present duty is left unperformed. A missionary journey to Joppa will not be accepted as a substitute for a similar visit to Nineveh. Prayer will not be a sweet savor if at the moment there is a human need crying for help unheeded. Running to Dorcas-meetings and temperance societies or attending noonday prayer-meetings will not win the smile of approval while home-duties are neglected.

Then the work we do must itself be pure and good work in a lawful and proper calling. No

formal consecration can make any wrong-doing pleasing to the Master.

Then, again, we must do our work well. Work that we slight or do dishonestly is not acceptable service. This phase of Christian duty is sometimes overlooked. Those who would not utter a false word or commit a dishonest act will yet perform their work carelessly or imperfectly. The principles of religion apply just as well to the carpenter's trade or to the tailor's or to the housekeeper's work as to the business of the banker or the merchant. It is just as really dishonest to sew up a seam that will rip or to put inferior material or bad workmanship into a building as it is to use a short yardstick or light weights or to adulterate coffee or sugar. God is not pleased with any work unless it is the very best that we can render.

The old cathedral-builders understood this when they finished every smallest detail of their stupendous fabrics as conscientiously as the most massive parts. The gilded spires, far away in the clouds, which no human eye could ever inspect, were made with as much care as the altar-mouldings or the carvings on the great doors, which all should see. They slighted nothing because it was not to be exposed to human gaze. They wrought for the great

Taskmaster's eye. "Why carve you so carefully the tresses of that statue's head?" asked one of an ancient sculptor as he wrought with marvelous pains on the back part of the figure. "The statue will stand high up in its niche, with its back to the wall, and no one will see it."—"Ah! the gods will see it," was the sublime answer. So must we work if we would render pleasing service to the Lord. The builder must build as conscientiously in the parts that are to be covered from sight as in those that will be most conspicuous. The dressmaker must sew as faithfully the hidden seams as the most showy. I do not believe that we can ever serve Christ acceptably by any kind of shams or deceits.

If we do our secular work thus, it will be acceptable to the Lord as service rendered to him. It may be impossible with each separate act to have the conscious feeling, "I do this for Christ." As far as possible, we should cultivate the habit of this minute serving. It will give a wondrous inspiration to our lives, and will change even drudgery into service as holy as angels' ministries. It is not impossible to learn to do even this. But if the great underlying motive of all our life be to serve and honor Christ and bless the world, the whole in-

cludes all its parts. And thus the dreariest paths of duty will become bright ways of joy, the commonest drudgeries of life will become clothed in garments of beauty, and all routine-work, in home and field, in shop and office, in school and study, will appear sacred and holy because done for the Master.

But amid these common secular duties come countless opportunities of serving in another sense by active ministries to others. This is always pleasing to Christ; indeed, he puts himself behind every one who needs help or comfort, and accepts all deeds of benevolence and true charity as done to himself. And there is not an hour of our waking existence that does not bring us in contact with other lives that need something we have to give. We are not to wait for opportunities to do great things—not to keep watching for some splendid thing which by its conspicuous importance may win for us the applause of men—but are to do always, moment by moment, the thing that comes to our hand. It may be to speak a cheering word to one who is disheartened, to join in a child's play, to mend a broken toy, to send a few flowers made more fragrant by your love into a sick-room, or to write a letter of condolence or sympathy. It is the

thing, small or great, which our hand finds at the moment to do.

Or our part in serving may often be to wait. There are times when we can do nothing more. The voice which has been wont to say, "Go and labor," is heard saying, "Lie still and wait." Then quiet, submissive, unmurmuring patience pleases Christ just as well as ever did the most intense activities in other days.

Or it may be in suffering that we are called to serve. There come occasions in the life of each one of us when the best thing for us is darkness and pain, when we can do most for the cause of Christ by suffering for his sake. In such cases the secret of service lies in joyful resignation, asking

> "What would God have this sorrow do for me?
> What is its mission? What its great design?
> What golden fruit lies hidden in its husk?
> How shall it nurse my virtue, nerve my will,
> Chasten my passions, purify my love,
> And make me in some goodly sense like him
> Who bore the cross of sorrow while he lived
> And hung and bled upon it when he died,
> And now in glory wears the victor's crown?"

Into a prisoner's cell came each day for half an hour a few rays of sunlight. He found a nail and a stone on his floor, and with these rude imple-

ments cut and chiseled day after day during the few moments when the light lay upon the wall, until in the stone he had cut the image of the Christ upon his cross. In the dark days of sorrow that come to us we may serve Christ by seeking to sculpture his sweet beauty, not in cold stone, but on the warm, living walls of our own hearts.

Thus we see that serving the Lord is not the privilege and pleasure of a few rare hours alone, but embraces the whole wide range of life and work and takes in all our relationships to home, to friends, to humanity, to business, to pleasure. If the heart be right, our whole life becomes one unbroken series of services rendered to the Lord.

The vital point in this whole matter is the motive that underlies it all. It is possible to live a very laborious life filled with intense activities, and yet never, from youth to old age, do one deed that Christ accepts as service. It is possible even to live a life of what is called religious service, full of what are regarded as sacred duties, and yet never in one thing truly serve Christ. The heart may never have been given to him at all. Or the motives may have been wrong. That which makes any act distinctively a Christian act is that it is done in the name of Christ and to please him.

The moralist does right things, but without any reference to Christ, not confessing him or loving him; the Christian does the same things, but does them because the Master wants him to do them. As one has beautifully said, "What we can do for God is little or nothing, but we must do our little nothings for his glory." This is the motive that, filling our hearts, makes even drudgery divine because it is done for Christ. It may be but to sweep a room or rock an infant to sleep or teach a ragged child or mend a rent or plane a board; but if it is done as unto the Lord, it will be owned and accepted. But it may be the grandest of works —the founding of an asylum, the building of a cathedral or a whole life of eloquence or display; but if it is not done for Christ, it all counts for nothing.

There is no life in the world so sweet as that of one who truly serves Christ. It is always easy to toil for one we love. And when the heart is full of love for the Master, it throws a wondrous warmth and tenderness about all duty. Things that would be very austere or repulsive merely as duties become very easy when done for him.

It was the strange fancy of a little child, writes George Macdonald, as he stood on a summer's

evening looking intently and thoughtfully at the great banks of clouds piled like mountains of glory about the setting sun: "Mother, I wish I could be a painter."—"Why, my child?"—"For then I would help God paint the clouds and the sunsets." It was a strange and beautiful aspiration. But our commonest work in this world may be made far nobler than that. We may live to touch hues of loveliness in immortal spirits which shall endure for ever.

Clouds dissolve and float away. The most gorgeous sunset splendors vanish in a few moments. The artist's canvas crumbles and his wondrous creations fade. But work done for Christ endures for ever. A life of simple consecration leaves a trace of imperishable beauty on everything it touches. Not great deeds alone, but the smallest, the obscurest, the most prosaic, write their record in fadeless lines.

We need to have but the one care—that we live our one little life truly unto the Lord.

XI.

HUMILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

THERE are some rare and beautiful virtues in whose shadow evils lurk. Thus humility is one of the loveliest of the graces. It is an ornament which in the sight of God is of great price. It is an element of character which wins the admiration of all the world. It is the highest proof of inner beauty of soul. It is like the fragrance of the lovely violet hidden amid the more conspicuous forms of life, unseen, but filling all the air with its sweet perfume. No grace is more highly commended in the Scriptures.

And yet in its shade there hide very specious counterfeits of itself. Many a man, while seriously believing that he was exercising an acceptable humility, has buried his talents in the earth, hidden his light under a bushel, lived a useless life when he might have been a blessing to many, and passed in the end to a darkened and crownless future.

The virtue and the vice lie so close together and look so much alike that we are quite apt to be deceived. We all admire humility. We are pleased to find a man who does not place a high estimate on his own powers, and who modestly shrinks from great responsibilities even when they are pressed upon him. Amid the almost universal strife for the highest places, it is refreshing to find a man who is not scheming for preferment, and who even declines proffered trusts and honors. The exceeding rarity of modesty and humility in men's self-estimates makes these traits shine in very charming beauty when they do appear. We grow so sick of men's pretensions, their bold pressing of their own virtues and excellences upon our attention, and their eagerness to assume responsibilities for which they have no adequate fitness, that we very easily glide into the other extreme.

It is especially in the sphere of moral and spiritual work that we are most apt to excuse ourselves from duty on the plea of humility. Even those who quite eagerly accept important positions in secular life, and perform their duties with confidence and effectiveness, shrink from the simplest exercise of their powers in Christian work. Men who at the bar or on the judge's bench can utter

most eloquent words in behalf of justice and right cannot be induced to open their lips in exhortation or prayer in a religious meeting. Ladies who in the parlor and social circle exercise their conversational powers with wondrous grace and earnestness cannot sit down beside an anxious inquirer to try to guide a soul to Christ, or read and pray in a sick-room, where their tender voice and gentle sympathy would impart such marvelous help.

Over all the Church the prevalent tendency upon the part of lay-members is to shrink from the exercise of their gifts in the Master's work. And the plea is unfitness, want of ability. Classes go untaught in many a Sabbath-school, and there are thousands of children that ought to be gathered in and trained. Meanwhile, there are large numbers of Christian men and women in the churches, with abundant ability for such service, but who shrink from it and try to satisfy their own uneasy consciences by humbly pleading unfitness for the delicate duties. There are urgent necessities for work in every line of Christian enterprise. There are fields that need only reasonable culture to render them fruitful. There are voices calling to duty that break upon our ears every moment amid the noises of the street. There are cries of human

distress and want that are for ever coming to our hearts with their urgent appeals. But amid all these opportunities for usefulness, these waiting, clamorous duties and these pathetic pleadings for help, gifted men and women sit with folded hands.

It is not because they have no interest in the Master's work or are insensible to the calls of duty and the cries of distress. It is because they are unconscious of their own power. They do not believe that they have ability to do the things that need to be done. They think it would be presumption for them, with their weak and unskilled hands, to undertake the duties that solicit them. So they fold their talent away and bury it, and think that they have acted in the line of a beautiful and commendable humility, in modestly declining such important responsibilities. It does not occur to them that they have grievously sinned.

Our humility serves us falsely when it leads us to shrink from any duty. The plea of unfitness or inability is utterly insufficient to excuse us. It is too startlingly like that offered by the one-talented man in the parable, whose gift was so small that there seemed no use in trying to employ it. The lurid light that the sequel to his story flashes

upon us should arouse us to read the meaning of personal responsibility, and to hasten to employ every shred of a gift that God has bestowed upon us.

The talent may be very small—so small that it scarcely seems to matter whether it is used or not so far as its impression on the world or on other lives is concerned; and yet we can never know what is small or what is great in this life, in which every cause starts consequences that sweep into eternity.

> "Only a thought; but the work it wrought
> Could never by tongue or pen be taught,
> For it ran through a life like a thread of gold,
> And the life bore fruit a hundred fold.
>
> "Only a word; but 'twas spoken in love,
> With a whispered prayer to the Lord above;
> And the angels in heaven rejoiced once more,
> For a new-born soul entered in by the door."

It is the faithfulness of the one-talented million rather than of the richly-endowed one or two that is needed to-day to hasten the coming of Christ's kingdom. There is not a gift so small that it is not wanted to make the work of the church complete. There is not one so small but that its hiding away leaves some life unblest. There is not one so insignificant that it may not start a wave

of influence which shall roll on over the sea of human life until it breaks on the shores of eternity.

But the most startling phase of this subject is that which concerns the person himself. Instead of being a merely negative act, or even a praiseworthy humility, to decline a responsibility, it is described in the Scriptures as a great dishonor to Christ, who has bestowed his gifts upon us, and as involving the most calamitous and farreaching personal consequences. All gifts are granted to be used, and used to the utmost. We are required to develop our abilities by exercise until they have attained the very highest possibility of power and usefulness, and to employ them in doing work which will honor God and bless the world.

The perversion of our gifts or their degradation to unworthy ends, we all reprobate as sinful. The man with great power for usefulness who employs this power to destroy others, to lead them astray, to corrupt and poison the fountains of life, we condemn as basest of mortals. There are many such men, who live to tarnish purity, to spread ruin, to disseminate falsehood and to lead the unwary to perdition. For these there must be a terrible retribution. But the phase of this ques-

tion which I am now considering is not misuse but nonuse of gifts. It is a fearful thing to take a faculty given wherewith to bless the world, and use it in such a way as to leave blight and woe and curse instead of blessing. But it is also a fearful thing to fold up the talent and hide it away. It is the blighting of our own hope of glory, the throwing away of our own crown.

In a quarry at Baalbec lies the largest wrought stone in the world, almost detached and ready for transportation, and in the ruined temple of the Sun near by is a place still empty and waiting for this stone after forty centuries. So large, so grand, it was a failure, because it never filled the place for which it was designed; and who can tell how many human lives lie among the wastes and ruins of life that God intended to fill grand places? When they were called they declined to accept the responsibility. They folded their talents away and buried them, and for ever they will lie in the quarries, pale ghosts of glorious might-have-beens, while the niches in God's temple which they were meant to fill and adorn remain for ever empty, memorials of their hopeless and irreparable failure. It never can be known until the final disclosure how many glorious gifts have thus been

lost to the world, nor how many lives with grand possibilities have shriveled and died under the blighting curse of nonuse.

Responsibilities encircle us about. They make solemn all of life's relations. They charge even our lightest acts and our unconscious influence with the most weighty seriousness. We can only fulfill life's grand meaning when we accept every responsibility with glad welcome and reverent self-confidence. There is a wide difference between self-conceit and that proper estimate of one's own powers that rates them justly and fairly and is not afraid to put them to the test. That self-confidence is not wrong which leads us to accept without distrust the responsibilities which God lays at our feet. Humility is not meant to make dwarfs out of giants. A man of great gifts, in order to be humble, is not required to esteem himself a poor ungifted and good-for-nothing man. We need to revise our ideas of humility. If we must give account to God for every gift of usefulness, and for its fullest possible exercise, we must honor our redeemed powers, appreciate their true value, and then devote them to the service of Christ and of our fellow-men.

We are not put into this world for idle ease, but

for most earnest work. They misunderstood the meaning of Christian life who in olden days fled away to the deserts and dwelt in huts and caves and lonely cells, far from the noise and strife of the world, and they misread the divine writing also who think in these days to serve Christ only in prayer and devotion, while they go not out to toil for him.

"Hark, hark! a voice amid the quiet intense!
It is thy duty waiting thee without:
Open thy door straightway and get thee hence;
Go forth into the tumult and the shout;
Work, love, with workers, lovers, all about.
Then, weary, go thou back with failing breath,
And in thy chamber make thy prayer and moan;
One day upon his bosom, all thine own,
Thou shalt lie still, embraced in holy death."

There is no such thing as a consecrated life which is not consecrated to service. The way to spiritual health lies in the paths of toil. The reason of so much doubt and discontent in the hearts of Christian people is that so many sit with folded hands, with no occupation but brooding over their own cares. If they would but go out and begin to toil for others, they would forget themselves, and the joy of the Lord would flow into their souls. There is no way to fulfill life's

grand meaning and to enter at last into fullest joy but by living lives of devotion to duty.

Let no one, then, hide away from the solemn responsibilities of his calling in any imagined humility or lowly estimate of his own abilities. When God calls us to a work he gives the needed strength. Not one of us knows the possibilities of usefulness that lie folded up in his hand and brain and heart. The Lord can use human feebleness as well as human strength. To him that is faithful in a little, more is given, and more and more.

"What are we set on earth for? Say to toil;
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
And death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with his odorous oil
To wrestle, not to reign; and he assigns
All thy tears over like pure crystallines
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labor, to their heart and hand,
From thy hand and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dewdrop with another near."

XII.

NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO.

"She sat and wept, and with her untressed hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blessed to touch;
And he wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul because she loved so much."

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

THERE are many people who want to be useful, who want to live to help others, who find insuperable obstacles in the way. There are some to whom they find it quite easy to minister—those of lovely character, those who are their friends and who readily reciprocate any favors shown to them. But it will not do to confine the outgoings of their helpfulness and ministry to such small classes as these. Even sinners do good to those that do good to them and give to those of whom they hope to receive again. The Christian is to do more. He is even to do good to them that hate him. He is to minister to any who need his ministry, despite their character or their treatment of

him. Even toward unworthy and disagreeable people he is to maintain that love that never faileth.

But how can I help one whom I cannot respect? How can I be useful to one who treats me only with insults and slights?

There is a way of relating ourselves to all men about us which solves all these difficulties and makes it easy for us to do good to any one. So long as we think of ourselves and of what is due to us from others, it will be impossible for us to minister to very many people. But where true Christian love reigns in the heart the centre of life falls no longer inside the narrow circle of self.

Those who study carefully our Lord's life will be struck with his wonderful reverence for human life. He looked upon no one with disdain or contempt. The meanest fragment of humanity that crept into his presence, trampled, torn, stained, defiled, was yet sacred in his eyes. He never despised any human being. And, further, he stood before men, not as a king, demanding attention, reverence, service, but as one who wished to serve, to help, to lift up. He said he had not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. He never thought of what was due from men to him, but always of

what he could do for them, how he could serve them. How could it be otherwise, since he came to earth solely to save men and since his heart was so full of love for them? Whenever a human being stood before him, he saw one in whose heart were sorrows which needed sympathy, or one bruised by sin needing healing and restoration. Thus he was easily able to serve all. The more repulsive the life that stood before him, the more deeply, in one sense, did it appeal to his love, because it needed his help all the more on account of its repulsiveness.

We shall be prepared to seek the good of others in the largest, truest way only when we have learned to look upon human lives as our Lord did. There was not a poor ruined creature that came into his presence in whom he did not see, under all the wasting of sin, something that he esteemed worthy of his love. There was not one whom he thought it a degradation to serve. When the disciples were quarreling as to which one should take the servant's place and wash the feet of the others, he quietly arose and performed the humble service. He was never more conscious of his exalted glory than he was that hour, and yet there was no reluctance in his heart. The question

of their immeasurable inferiority to him never rose in his mind. He never thought for a moment that these men were not worthy to have such menial service performed for them by such hands as his. He saw in them something which made it no degradation even for his divinity to serve them. When we have learned to look upon human lives as he did it will be no painful task to minister, at whatever cost, to the lowliest and most unworthy about us.

We are willing enough to serve those whom we honor. But we are apt to hold our lives as too sacred to be spent or sacrificed for the sake of those whom we regard as beneath ourselves. A tender and delicate woman leaves her lovely, sheltered home, and finds her way into the fever-wards of the city hospital or into the gloomy cells of a prison to try to help the suffering or the criminals she finds there. A cultured girl turns away from comfort and luxury, from circles of loving friends, and from social honors and triumphs, and plunges into the heart of a heathen land to live out her beautiful and golden life in toiling for savages. A godly young man turns away from applause and ease, and gives himself to the rescue of the squalid classes in a great city. On all hands peo-

ple say, "These lives are too precious for such work. They are too refined, too beautiful, too delicate, too valuable, to be sacrificed in such service." But if there was nothing in that most precious, that divine life of the Lord Jesus that was too good to be poured out in serving such as those for whom he gave his life, shall we say that any human life is so sacred, so valuable, that it may not find fitting employment in serving the poorest, the most ignorant, the most squalid men and women to be found in prison, in jungle, in hospital, in dreary tenement or wretched garret?

When we learn to measure others, not by their rank and station, but by the worth of their spiritual nature, by their immortality, by the possibilities that lie in the most ruined life, it will be no longer humiliating for us to do even the humblest service for the least of God's creatures. Then there will be nothing in us that will seem too rich or too sacred to be poured out for the sake even of the most despised. We may honor ourselves and may be conscious of all the power and dignity of our lives as God's children, and yet not think ourselves too good to minister to the smallest and the least.

There is no other attitude in which we can stand to those about us in which we can fulfill the law

of Christian love, which requires us to do good to all men. We must not think of ourselves as deserving attention from others. We are not in this world to be made much of, to be waited upon and served. The moment we begin to relate ourselves in this way to others we cease to be largely helpful, or helpful at all in the Christian sense. We measure every one then by his ability and willingness to serve us. We rate others as they are, in our estimation, agreeable or disagreeable. Repulsiveness repels us because we think of it only in its effect upon our own feelings and tastes. We love pleasant people only, are kind only to those that are kind to us, and serve only those whom we regard as honorable and worthy. Rude treatment from others shuts our hearts toward them. In a word, we do nothing from disinterested motives and seek always our own. This may make us very pleasant and agreeable in the small circle of our personal friends, and even in business and social life, but it is infinitely removed from the spirit and practice of true Christian love and service.

We are to regard ourselves as the servants of others for Jesus' sake. We are to put ourselves before men as our Master did, not asking what benefit or help we can get from them, but what we

can do for them. It will be seen at a glance that if we look upon others in this disinterested way, our hearts yearning to do them good, the whole aspect of the world will be changed. We are not here to receive and to gather, but to give and to scatter—not to be served and treated generously, but to serve regardless of men's character or their treatment of us. This invests every human life with a wondrous sacredness. It brings down our pride and keeps it under our feet. It changes scorn to compassion. It softens our tones and takes from us our haughty, dictatorial spirit. Instead of being repelled by men's moral repulsiveness, our pity is stirred and our hearts go out in deep, loving longing to heal and to bless them. Instead of being offended by men's rudeness and unkindness, we bear patiently with their faults, hoping to do them good. Nothing that they may do to us turns our love to hate. We continue to seek their interest despite their slights, insults and cruelties. We are glad to spend and be spent for others even though the more abundantly we love them the less they love us.

With this spirit it is no longer hard to do good to the most disagreeable people, to help the most unworthy. It is easy, then, to love our enemies

in the only way it is possible for us to love them. We cannot love them as we do our friends. We cannot approve their faults or commend their immoralities or make black white. We cannot make ourselves think their characters beautiful when they are full of repulsiveness, or their conduct right when it is manifestly wrong. Love plays no such tricks with our moral perceptions. It does not hoodwink us or make us color-blind. It does not make us tolerant of sin or indifferent to men's blemishes. Christ never lowered, by so much as a hair's breadth, the perfect standard of holiness by which he measured all men and all life. Nor must we. We are ever to keep living in our souls the pure and unspotted ideal. We are not to look upon any sin leniently or apologetically, and yet we are to love the sinner, to pity him and have compassion upon him, and instead of turning away from him in horror and self-righteous pride we are to seek by every means to lift him up and save him. Under all the ruin of his sin is the shattered beauty of the divine image which the gentle fingers of love may repair and restore.

XIII.

WEARINESS IN WELL-DOING.

"THE beginning is half of the whole," said the ancient Greeks. And it is true — true whether the beginning be right or wrong. And yet a good beginning is not enough. It is the last step that wins in the race. It is the last stroke that fells the tree. It is the last grain of sand that turns the scales. One of the sterling virtues in practical life is continuance—continuance through all obstacles, hindrances and discouragements. It is unconquerable persistence that wins. The paths of life are strewn with the skeletons of those who fainted and fell in the march. Life's prizes can be won only by those who *will not fail.* Success in every field must be reached through antagonism and conflict.

In no sphere are these things truer than in the moral. Many start well in the Christian life, with rich hope and glowing ardor, who soon fail. They

become discouraged at the hardness and toilsomeness of the way or at the little impression they are able to make on the world, and grow weary. Such faint-heartedness will never win the honors and crowns of immortal life. These are only for those who overcome.

There are two ways of becoming weary in well-doing. We may be weary *in* it or *of* it. And there is an immense difference in the two experiences. The best men may grow weary *in* their service. Human nature is frail. We are not angels, with exhaustless powers of endurance. But we are to guard against growing weary *of* our great work, as sometimes we are tempted even to be. There are discouragements that sorely try our faith, but, whatever they are, they should not be allowed to cause us to faint.

"What is the use of serving God?" cries one. "I have tried for years to be faithful to him and to live as he would have me to live, but somehow I do not succeed in life. I have no blessing on my work. My business does not prosper. There is my neighbor, who never prays, who disregards the precepts of God's word, who desecrates the Lord's day, whose life is unjust, hard, false and selfish. And yet he gets along far better than I

do. What is the profit of serving God?" Many a good man has felt thus in his heart, even if he has not spoken his thoughts aloud.

To all this it may be replied that God's years are long and he is never in a hurry. As a good Christian man said to a scoffer who boasted that his crops were good though he had never prayed for God to bless them, while the Christian's after all his praying, had failed, "The Lord does not always settle his accounts with men in the month of October." Besides, worldly prosperity is not always promised, nor is it always a blessing. There come many times in every man's life when trial is better than prosperity. A little with Heaven's benediction is better than great gains poisoned by the curse of God. Of this at least we may always be sure — that in the end well-doing will succeed and ill-doing will bring sorrow and woe. "My Lord Cardinal," said Anne of Austria to Cardinal Richelieu, "God is a sure paymaster. He may not pay at the close of every week or month or year, but he pays in the end."

We may be tempted also to grow weary of doing good to others. There are things to discourage if we look no farther than the present. Attainments come slowly. The buds of spiritual growth open

out languidly in the chill climate of this world. Men's faults cling tenaciously. Battles are tedious and victories come painfully, and only after long and fierce struggle. Everything about Christian life is difficult of attainment. In the ardor of his youthful zeal and the glow of his yet untried and unbaffled hope, the young Christian is apt to feel that everything is going to yield at once to his strokes. He expects to see every touch of his tell on men. He looks for immediate results in every case. He has large hope and enthusiasm, but has not strong faith. He begins, and soon discovers his mistake. People are pleased with his earnestness, but their stubborn hearts do not yield. He finds himself beating against stone walls. Results do not appear. To him this is strange and discouraging, but it has always been so. Many people reject the blessings God is sending to their doors. We come to them laden with rich spiritual things, and they turn away to chase some vanishing illusion. We tell them of Christ, and they turn to listen to the siren song that would lure them on the rocks of ruin. That this is disheartening cannot be denied.

But does not God behold our work? Does he not see our toil and our tears? Does he not witness

our faithfulness in his service? Suppose the seed does fall partly on the hard-trodden roadway and yield no fruit; will the sower fail of his reward? Will he be forgotten in that day when God remembers his faithful ones? No! Though men may reject your message, if you have given it faithfully and with true motive, you shall be blessed.

"But men are ungrateful." Very true. You minister to those who are in need, taking the bread from your own plate to feed their hunger, denying yourself necessary things to give to them; you visit and care for them in sickness; you spend time and money to relieve them. Then, so soon as the trouble is past and they need your money or help no longer, they turn away from you as if you had wronged them. Almost rarest of human virtues is true gratitude. The one may return, but the nine come no more. Many a faithful Christian, having spent time and means in relieving distress only to be forgotten by, and perhaps even to receive wrong from, those he has aided, becomes weary, and says, "It is of no use; I will try it no more."

I know how much sweeter it is to work for those who are grateful, who remember our kindness, who speak their thanks and return love for

every favor shown. It lightens one's burdens. Grateful words are like cups of cold water to one who is weary and faint; and surely it is fit that men should be grateful.

But suppose they are not. Suppose years of kindness are forgotten in a moment. Suppose great sacrifices are never thought of again. Suppose deeds of love are rewarded with insult, injury, calumny, wrong, or with the stab of malice. Do these returns rob you of those higher rewards which God promises to every self-denial made for his sake? Suppose one has to go through this world weary and lonely, giving out his life in unsparing measure for others, and receiving only neglect, ingratitude, even persecution. Suppose one is misunderstood, as so many good people are, his motives misrepresented, misconstrued, falsified. Suppose one is maligned, calumniated, abused. Because earth misconstrues and misunderstands, will heaven? No; there is one place where men are understood and their work and worth appreciated. No good deed will be forgotten there. No lowly sacrifice will be overlooked. There will be commendation and reward there. We may not reap here, but we shall reap nevertheless.

Then many who appeal to us for aid are utterly

unworthy. Those who dispense charity have to resort to all manner of care and pains to protect themselves against imposition. A pitiful story is told—pitiful enough to melt the heart of a miser. You give money, and the treacherous recipient steals into the nearest dram-shop and spends it for strong drink. Or you ask where the applicant lives, and, being reluctantly informed, you go miles away, to find that no such person ever lived there. The result of such discoveries, unless we are careful, is that the warmest hearts are closed against all appeals for help. The tendency is to chill and freeze the fountains of our charity and to stay their outflow toward the needy. We are tempted to say, "Giving money is only throwing it away; it is charity wasted as utterly as fragrance in the desert."

It certainly is disheartening to labor for months to try to help some one, only to have him prove unworthy in the end. It seems like building a house of the costliest materials in a quagmire only to sink away out of sight. Yet they are digging up in these days buried palaces and cities in the Old World which have long been hidden out of sight. So work may seem to sink away and be lost, but God will let nothing be lost that is done

for his name. It will reappear in the end. He is faithful, and will not forget your work and labor of love. You will be rewarded, even though your work has been expended on unworthy beneficiaries. Though the recipient of your charity turned out an impostor, yet, if it was bestowed in Christ's name and for his sake, he will say at the last, "Ye did it unto me."

Another is discouraged because there seems no blessing on his work.

You are a parent, and you have been laboring and praying for years for your child's salvation, yet you do not see the hoped-for result. You are a teacher, and although you toil with all your might, you do not notice any impression on the lives of those you teach. Or you are a preacher, and you preach with all diligence and faithfulness, but men do not turn to the Lord, and you are heavy-hearted and sometimes tempted to give it all up in despair.

But do you really *know* that your work is not blessed? Do you know that there are no results? Things are not what they seem. The quickest, most evident successes, as they appear to us, are often in reality the worst failures. The least comes of them in the end. In Christian work we have

frequently to discount sudden and tropical growths, or at least to fear for their genuineness and permanence. The quiet and gradual growth is usually the truest.

Then we cannot measure spiritual results as we can those which are physical. The artist sees the picture growing upon his canvas as he works day by day. The builder sees the wall rising as he lays stone upon stone. But the spiritual builder is working with invisible blocks, is rearing a fabric whose walls he cannot see. The spiritual artist is painting away in the unseen. His eyes cannot behold the impressions, the touches of beauty he makes.

Sometimes the results of work on human lives may be seen in the expansion and beautifying of character, in the conversion of the ungodly, in the comforting of sorrow, in the uplifting and ennobling of the degraded; and yet much of our work must be done in simple faith, and perhaps in heaven it will be seen that the best results of our lives have been from their unconscious influences, and our most fruitful efforts those we considered in vain.

The old water-wheel turns round and round outside the wall. It seems to be idle work that it is

doing. You see nothing accomplished. But its shaft runs through the mill-wall and turns a great system of machinery there, and makes bread to feed many a hungry mouth. So we toil away, many of us, and oftentimes see no rewards or fruits. But if we are true to God, we are making results somewhere for his glory and the good of others. The shaft runs through into the unseen and turns wheels there, preparing blessings and food for hungry lives. No true work for Christ can ever fail. Somewhere, some time, somehow, there will be results. We need not be discouraged or disheartened, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not. But what if we faint?

XIV.

WAYSIDE MINISTRIES.

"I expect to pass through this world but once. If, therefore, there be any kindness I can do to any fellow-being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

THERE are two ways in which all of us work, and two classes of results which flow from our lives. There are things we do purposely—that we deliberately plan to do. We take pains to do them. We spend long years oftentimes in fitting ourselves to do them. They cost us thought and care. We travel many miles, perchance, to perform them. They are the things we live to do.

Then there are other things we do that have formed no part of our plan. We did not set out in the morning to accomplish them. They are unplanned, unpurposed things, not premeditated or prearranged. They are wayside ministries. They are the little things we do between the greater things. They are the seeds we drop by chance from

our hand in the path as we go out to the broad field to sow. They are the minor kindnesses and courtesies that fill up the interstices of our busy days. They are the little flowers and lowly plants that grow in the shade of the majestic trees or hidden away like violets under the taller plants and shrubs. They are the smaller opportunities of usefulness which open to us as we carry our great responsibilities. They are the things of which we take no note, and perhaps retain no memory—mere touches given as we hasten by, words dropped as we pass along.

We set no store by this part of our life-work. We do not expect to see any result from it. We pride ourselves on our great masterpieces. We point to them as the things which fitly represent us, the things in which we hope to live.

And yet oftentimes these unpurposed things are the holiest and most beautiful things we do, far outshining those which we ourselves prize so highly. I believe that when the books are opened it will be seen that the very best parts of many lives are the parts by which they set no store and from which they expected no outcome, no fruits, while the things they took pride in and wrought with plan and pains shall prove to be of but small value. Our

Lord tells us that the righteous shall be surprised in the judgment to hear of noble deeds wrought by them of which they have no knowledge or recollection. No doubt there is a wondrous amount of good done unconsciously of which the doers shall never be aware until it is disclosed in the future life.

It is said that when Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor, returned to his native land with those rare works of art which have made his name immortal, chiseled in Italy with patient toil and glowing inspiration, the servants who unpacked the marbles scattered upon the ground the straw which was wrapped around them. The next summer flowers from the gardens of Rome were blooming in the streets of Copenhagen from the seeds thus borne and planted by accident. While pursuing his glorious purpose and leaving magnificent results in breathing marble, he was at the same time, and unconsciously, scattering other beautiful things in his path to give cheer and gladness.

And so, in all true living, while men execute their greater plans, they are ever unintentionally performing a series of secondary acts which often yield most beneficent and farreaching results. There is a wayside ministry, for instance, made up

of countless little courtesies, gentle words, mere passing touches on the lives of those we meet casually, impulses given by our salutations, influences flowing indirectly from the things we do and the words we speak—a ministry undesigned, unplanned, unnoted, merely incidental—and yet it is impossible to measure the results of these accidents of usefulness.

We go out in the morning to our round of duties, and perform them with more or less faithfulness and effectiveness. But during the busy hours of the day we find opportunity for doing many minor kindnesses. We meet a friend on the street whose heart is heavy, and we stop to speak a word of thoughtful cheer and hope which sings in his ear like a bar of angels' song all day long. We ring a neighbor's door-bell, as we go out from dinner, to inquire for his sick child, and there is a little more brightness in that sad home all the afternoon because of this thoughtfulness. We walk a few steps with a young man who is in danger of slipping out of the way, and let fall a sincere word of interest which he will remember and which may help to save him.

All sorts of people come to us on all sorts of errands during the day. We cannot talk much to

each, and yet we may drop into each heart a word of kindness that will prove a seed of beauty. We meet people in business relations. To talk to them on religious themes may be neither practicable nor expedient. And yet there is not one of them to whom we may not minister in some way. One man has had sorrow in his home. His face carries the marks of sore struggle and inward pain. By a gentler bearing, a mellowed speech, a heartier hand-grasp or longer pressure, and a thoughtful expression of the sympathy and interest we feel, we send him away strangely comforted. Another is staggering under financial burdens, and a hopeful word gives him courage to stand more bravely under his load. We are writing business letters, and we put in a personal sentence or a kindly inquiry, revealing a human heart even amid the great clashing, grinding wheels of business, and it carries a pulse of better feeling into some dingy office and some dreary treadmill life far away. Not one of these things have we done with any clear thought, or even consciousness, of doing good, and yet, like the flower-seeds the sculptor bore back amid the wrappings of his marbles, they yield loveliness and fragrance to brighten many a bare and toilsome path.

Social life presents also countless opportunities for these wayside ministries. It would be hard to imagine anything more icy and cold, more devoid of the sweet charities of life, than much of the formal intercourse of society, especially in circles of wealth and fashion. It is regulated by arbitrary rules which leave no room for tender heart-play. It is oftentimes insincere. The staple of its conversation is the emptiest of idle gossip or the most merciless dissection of character.

And yet what opportunities does this very social intercourse afford for the most beautiful wayside ministries! What words of kindness can be spoken! how often, too, where they are most sorely needed and craved! There are hearts starving under these icy formalities. There are gentle spirits amid all this mad whirl that long for something true and real. There are sorrows under all this glitter. The doors are shut to those who come professedly to bring blessing. Even Christ stands outside, perchance, knocking in vain. There is no open entrance to any who would come with avowed intent to do good. And yet the Christian woman who enters the doors, even in the most formal way, may carry with her Heaven's sweetest benedictions. Many earnest Christians in early, primitive days vol-

untarily became slaves to gain access to the homes of the noble that they might at least live out the holy religion of Jesus in the heart of their households, and perchance win souls for heaven. Missionaries study medicine that they may be admitted into the homes of the people as physicians, and while there in that capacity they cannot but scatter some of the holy fragrance of the love of Christ.

To those whose hearts are full of the spirit of grace there are large opportunities for quiet and unpurposed usefulness opened in the formalities of social life. There need be nothing ostentatious: indeed, ostentation shuts the door at once. What is wanted is a deep and sincere piety that breathes out unconsciously in face and word and act and manner, like the fragrance of a flower, like the shining of a star, like the irresistible charm of rare beauty or tender music. Indeed, its unconsciousness is its greatest power. She who goes intending to say certain things or carry certain blessings or leave certain influences may fail. But, going from house to house with a soul full of goodness, purity and love, with a heart sincerely longing to leave blessing everywhere, with a speech seasoned with grace and breathing kindness and peace, it is impossible not to leave heavenly influ-

ences in every drawing-room. Impulses are given to better life. Strength is imparted to struggling weakness. Comfort is breathed softly into hearts that are sore with grief. Flowers from heaven's gardens are planted in earthly soil. Glimpses into a new and richer life are given. No woman with deep piety in her heart and Christlike grace in her life can go in and out in the formal routine of social life and not unwittingly perform a blessed ministry of good, leaving behind her many a bit of brightness and many a lovely flower.

Although unnoted on earth and unprized, the results of such ministry may outshine in splendor, in the great disclosure, the things to which most toil and thought have been given.

In every life there are these opportunities for wayside ministry. Indeed, the voluntary activities of any life do not by any means measure its influence. The things we do with deliberate intention make but a small part of the sum-total of our life-results. Our influence has no nights and keeps no Sabbaths. It is continuous as life itself. We are leaving impressions all the while on other lives. There is a ministry in our handshaking, in our greeting, in the most casual conversation, in the very expression we wear on our faces as we move

along the street, in the gentle sympathy that adds such a thrill of strength to fainting weariness,

> "Like moonlight on a troubled sea,
> Brightening the storm it cannot calm."

To meet some people on the sidewalk and have their cheery "Good-morning!" makes one happier all day. To encounter others is as dispiriting as meeting a funeral-procession. There is a magic potency always in a sunny face. There is a holy aroma always about unselfish love. A joyful person scatters gladness like song-notes. A consecrated Christian life sheds a tender warmth wherever it moves. What a wondrous sphere of usefulness is thus opened to every one of us! Preparation for it is best made by heart-culture.

It is purity, truth, helpfulness and love that sanctify the influence. Full of Christ, wherever we move we leave brightness and joy. Amid the busiest scenes, when engaged in the most momentous labors, we carry on at the same time a quiet, unpurposed ministry whose results shall spring up in our pathway like lovely flowers, or echo again in the hearts of others in notes of holy song, or glow in human lives in touches of radiant beauty.

XV.

THE BEAUTY OF QUIET LIVES.

In one of his poems Robert Browning represents the archangel Gabriel taking a poor boy's place:

> "Then to his poor trade he turned
> By which the daily bread was earned;
> And ever o'er the trade he bent,
> And ever lived on earth content;
> He did God's will—to him all one
> If on the earth or in the sun."

MANY people measure a man's power or effectiveness by the noise he makes in the world. But this standard is not always correct. The drum makes vastly more noise than the flute, but for true, soul-thrilling music and soothing power the flute is a thousand times more effective. Young men, when they start in life, usually think they must make all the noise they can, else their lives will be failures. They must make their voices heard loud above the din and clamor of the world, else they must remain unknown and die in obscurity. But thoughtful, observant years always prove how little

real power there is in "the bray of brass." Life is measured by its final and permanent results. Not by the place a man occupies before the public and the frequency and loudness of his utterances, but by the benefits and blessings which he leaves behind him in other lives, must his true effectiveness be rated. It will be seen, in the great consummation, that those who have wrought silently and without clamor or fame have in many cases achieved the most glorious permanent results.

"What shall I do lest life in silence pass?
And if it do,
And never prompt the bray of brass,
What need'st thou rue?
Remember aye the ocean's deeps are mute—
The shallows roar;
Worth is the ocean: fame is the bruit
Along the shore."

There are great multitudes of lowly lives lived on the earth which have no name among men, whose work no pen records, no marble immortalizes, but which are well known and unspeakably dear to God, and whose influence will be seen, in the end, to reach to farthest shores. They make no noise in the world, but it needs not noise to make a life beautiful and noble. Many of God's most potent ministries are noiseless. How silently all

day long the sunbeams fall upon the fields and gardens! and yet what cheer, what inspiration, what life and beauty, they diffuse! How silently the flowers bloom! and yet what rich blessings of fragrance do they emit! How silently the stars move on in their majestic marches around God's throne! and yet the telescope shows us that they are mighty worlds or great central suns representing utterly incalculable power. How silently the angels work, stepping with noiseless tread through our homes and performing ever their tireless ministries for us and about us! Who hears the flutter of their wings or the whisper of their tongues? and yet they throng along our path and bring rich joys of comfort, suggestion, protection, guidance and strength to us every day. How silently God himself works! He gives his blessing while we sleep. He makes no ado. We hear not his footfalls, and yet he is ever moving about us and ministering to us in ten thousand ways and bringing to us the rarest and finest gifts of his love. Then who does not remember the noiselessness of our Lord's human life on the earth? He did not strive or cry, nor did men hear his voice on the street. He sought not, but rather shunned, publicity and notoriety. His wondrous power was life-power, heart-power, which

he shed forth in silent influence among the people, but which is pulsing yet in all lands, in millions of hearts, and in all the vast abodes of redeemed spirits.

And many of our Lord's earthly servants have caught his spirit, and work so quietly that they are scarcely recognized among men as workers. In their humility they do not even suppose themselves to be of any use and mourn over their unprofitableness as Christ's servants, and yet in heaven they are written down as among the very noblest of his ministers. They do no great things, but their lives are full of radiations of blessing. There is a quiet and unconscious influence ever going forth from them that falls like a benediction on every life that comes into their shadow; for it is not only our elaborately-wrought deeds that leave results behind. Much of the best work we do in this world is done unconsciously. There are many people who are so busied in what is called secular toil that they can find few moments to give to works of benevolence. But they come out every morning from the presence of God and go to their daily business or toil, and all day, as they move about, they drop gentle words from their lips and scatter seeds of kindness along their path. To-

morrow flowers of the garden of God spring up in the hard, dusty streets of earth and along the paths of toil in which their feet have trodden.

More than once in the Scriptures the lives of God's people in this world are compared to the dew. There may be other points of analogy, but especially noteworthy is the quiet manner in which the dew performs its ministry. It falls silently and imperceptibly. It makes no noise. No one hears it dropping. It chooses the darkness of the night, when men are sleeping and when no one can witness its beautiful work. It covers the leaves with clusters of pearls. It steals into the bosom of the flower, and leaves a new cupful of sweetness there. It pours itself down among the roots of the grasses and tender herbs and plants. In the morning there is fresh beauty everywhere, and new life. The fields look greener, the gardens are more fragrant and all nature glows and sparkles with a new splendor.

Is there no suggestion here as to the manner in which we should seek to do good in this world? Should it not be our aim to have our influence *felt* rather than to be seen and heard? Should we not desire to scatter blessings so silently and so secretly that no one shall know what hand dropped

them? The whole spirit of our Lord's teaching confirms this: "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, *that thine alms may be in secret.*" We are commanded not to seek the praise of men—not to do good deeds to be seen of men or to receive reward of them. We are not to sound trumpets or announce our righteous acts from the housetop.

Translated into the phrase of daily life, these injunctions would seem to mean that we are not to seek to have all our benevolent acts published in the newspapers. They would seem to mean that we should not desire publicity and human praise for every generous thing we do, every sacrifice we make and every kindness we show. They seem, indeed, to imply that we should even take pains not to have our good deeds made known at all—that we should seek to perform them so silently and secretly that the world may never hear any report of them. When the motive is to receive praise of men or to exhibit our goodness, the act loses its beauty in God's sight.

This test applied may find many of us wanting. Are we willing to be as the dew—to steal abroad in the darkness, carrying blessings to men's doors which shall enrich them and do them good and

give them joy, and then steal away again before they awake to know what hand brought the gift? Are we willing to work without gratitude, without recognition, without human praise, without return? Are we content to have our lives poured out like the dew to bless the world and make it more fruitful, and yet to remain hidden away ourselves—to see the effects of our toil and sacrifice all about us in brightened homes and bettered character, in beauties and joys springing up, in renewed society, in good institutions, and in benefits prepared by our hands and enjoyed by others, and yet never to hear our names spoken in praise or honor, perhaps to hear the shouts of applause given to the names of others?

And yet is it not thus that we are to live as followers of Christ? Honor is to be sought for him. We are to seek to be blessings in the world, to breathe inspiration everywhere, to shed quickening influences upon other lives, to impart helpfulness and noble impulse to all we meet, and then to disappear, so that men may not praise us, but may lift their hearts to Christ alone. Florence Nightingale, having gone like an angel of mercy among the hospitals in the Crimea until her name was enshrined in every soldier's heart, asked to be ex-

cused from having her picture taken, as thousands begged, that she might drop out and be forgotten, and that Christ alone might be remembered as the author of the blessings her hands had ministered. That is the true Christian spirit.

And in this way we may all learn to live too if we will. In this way countless lowly ones have lived, and are living continually.

There are mothers who sometimes fret because their spheres of usefulness seem so circumscribed. They long to be able to do grand things, like the few who are lifted above the common level, and to be permitted to live their lives on the mountain-top in the gaze of the world. But they, in very truth, have far grander fields than they dream. No one who lives for God and for love can be called obscure. Do not the angels watch? Does not all heaven behold? Is any one obscure who has heaven for an amphitheatre? Then who can tell the mighty, farreaching influence of the life of a lowly mother who lives for her children? Mothers have lived in hardship and obscurity, training sons to move the world, and they have lived to good purpose.

The best work of the true parent and teacher is quiet, unconscious work. It is not what a man

says or does purposely and with direct intention that leaves the deepest mark in the world and in other lives, but it is the unconscious, unpurposed influences which go out from him like the perfumes from a garden, whether he wakes or sleeps, whether he is present or absent. God seems to blight the things that we are proud of and to make them come to naught. Then, when we are not intending to do anything grand, he uses us and our work for noble purposes and to make lasting impressions on the world and its life.

It is the quiet, unheralded lives that are silently building up the kingdom of heaven. Not much note is taken of them here. They are not reported in the newspapers. Their monuments will not make much show in the churchyard. Their names will not be passed down to posterity with many wreaths about them. But their work is blessed, and not one of them is forgotten.

Long, long centuries ago a little fern-leaf grew in a valley. Its veins were delicate and its fibres tender. It was very beautiful, but it fell and perished. It seemed useless and lost, for surely it had made no history and left no impression in this world. But wait. The other day a thoughtful man searching Nature's secrets came with pick

and hammer and broke off a piece of rock, and there on it his eyes traced

> "Fairy pencilings, a quaint design,
> Leafage, veining, fibres, clear and fine,
> And the fern's life lay in every line.
> So, I think, God hides some souls away,
> Sweetly to surprise us at the last day."

Not a life lived for God is useless or lost. The lowliest writes its history and leaves its impression somewhere, and God will open his books at the last, and men and angels will read the record. In this world these quiet lives are like those modest lowly flowers which make no show, but which hidden away under the tall plants and grasses, pour out sweet perfumes and fill the air with their odors. And in heaven they will receive their reward—not praise of men, but open confession by the Lord himself—in the presence of the angels and of the Father.

XVI.

KINDNESS THAT COMES TOO LATE.

"What use for the rope if it be not flung
Till the swimmer's grasp to the rock has clung?
What help in a comrade's bugle-blast
When the peril of Alpine heights is past?
What need that the spurring pæan roll
When the runner is safe beyond the goal?
What worth is eulogy's blandest breath
When whispered in ears that are hushed in death?
No, no! If you have but a word of cheer,
Speak it while I am alive to hear."

MRS. PRESTON.

I HAVE always been glad that there was one who brought out her alabaster vase and anointed the Lord beforehand for his burial. Most persons would have waited, keeping the vase sealed, till he was dead, and would then have broken it to anoint his body when it lay, torn, wounded and cold, wrapped in the garments of burial. But she did not wait. She opened the jar while he could enjoy its sweet perfume, and when his worn and weary feet could feel the delicious refreshment which it gave.

We have not to read between the lines to find the lesson. When one dies there is no lack of alabaster boxes to be brought from their hiding-places and unsealed. The kindest words are spoken then. Not a voice of faultfinding is heard in the darkened room where the dead form reposes in silence. A thousand pleasant things are said. A gentle charity covers and hides all his mistakes, and even his follies and sins. His life is talked over, and memory is busy gathering out the beautiful things he has done, the self-denials he has made and the kindnesses he has wrought for the poor along the years of his life. Every one that knew him comes and looks on his pale face and says some generous word about him, recalling some favor received from his hands or some noble deed wrought by him. Near friends go to the florist and order flowers, woven into anchors, crosses, harps, pillars or crowns, to be sent with their card and laid upon his coffin.

There is nothing wrong in all this. Flowers on the coffin are beautiful. When a Christian sleeps there they are fit symbols of the hope in which he rests. Then they seem to whisper sweet secrets of comfort for sorrowing hearts. They tell, too, of kindly feelings and gentle remembrances outside the darkened homes while hearts are breaking

within. They are the tokens of love and respect for the dead. There can be nothing inappropriate in the placing of a few choice flowers upon a coffin or on the bosom of the dead.

It is fitting, too, that kind words should be spoken even when the ear cannot hear them or the heart be warmed and thrilled by them. There is no richer tribute to a human life than the sincere witness of sorrowing friends around the coffin and the grave. It is natural that many a tender sleeping memory should be awakened at the touch of death. It is natural that when we have lost our friends all the sealed vases of affection should be broken open to anoint them for the last time. It is well that even death has power to stop the tongue of detraction, to subdue enmities, jealousies and emulations, to reveal the hitherto unappreciated beauties and excellences of a man's character, to cover with the veil of charity his blemishes and faults, and to thaw out the tender thoughts, the laggard gratitude and the long-slumbering kindly feelings in the hearts of his neighbors and friends.

But meantime there is a great host of weary men and women toiling through life toward the grave who sorely need *just now* the cheering words and helpful ministries which we can give. The

incense is gathering to scatter about their coffins, but why should it not be scattered in their paths to-day? The kind words are lying in men's hearts unexpressed, and trembling on their tongues unvoiced, which will be spoken by and by when these weary ones are sleeping, but why should they not be spoken now, when they are needed so much, and when their accents would be so pleasing and grateful?

Many a good man goes through life plain, plodding, living obscurely, yet living a true, honest, Christian life, making many a self-denial to serve others, doing many a quiet kindness to his neighbors and friends, who scarcely ever hears a word of thanks or cheer or generous commendation. He may hear many criticisms and many expressions of disparagement, but no approving words come to his ears. If his friends have pleasant things to say about him, they manage so to speak them that he will not hear them. Perhaps they are not uttered at all. Those he loves and toils for may be grateful, but their gratitude lies in their hearts like fruit-buds in the branches in February. The vases filled with kindly appreciation are kept sealed. The flowers are not cut from the stem.

You stand by his coffin, and there are enough

kind things said there to have brightened every hour of his life if they had been said at the right time. There are enough flowers piled upon his casket to have kept his chamber filled with fragrance through all his years if they had only been wisely scattered in daily clusters. How his heavy heart would have leaped and thanked God if he could have heard some of the expressions of affection and approval in the midst of life's painful strifes, and when staggering under its burdens, which are now wasted on ears that hear them not! How much happier his life would have been, and how much more useful, if he had known, amid his disappointments and anxieties, that he had so many generous friends who held him so dear! But, poor man! he had to die that the appreciation might express itself. Then the gentle words spoken over his cold form he could not hear. The flowers sent and strewn on his coffin had no fragrance for him. The love blossomed out too late.

Many a woman gives out her life for Christ in lowly, self-denying ministries. She turns away from ease and comfort and toils for the poor. With her own fingers she makes garments for the widow and orphan. When she is dead there is great mourning. The poor rise up and call her

blessed. Those she has clad gather about her coffin and show the coats and garments she made for them while she was alive. Her pastor preaches her funeral sermon with wondrous tenderness and eloquence. All very well. It is a sweet reward, a beautiful ending, for such a life. But would it not have been better if part at least of that kindness had been shown to her while her weary feet were walking on their long love-errands and her busy fingers were drawing the needle through seam after seam?

A husband piled most elaborate floral offerings about his wife's coffin, built a magnificent monument over her grave and spoke in glowing eulogy of her noble sacrifices. But it was whispered that he had not been the kindest of husbands to her while she lived. A daughter showed great sorrow at her mother's funeral and could not say enough in commendation of her, but it was known that she had thrust many a thorn into her pillow while she was living.

Is it not a better thing to seek to make the living happy than to leave them to walk along dreary paths without sympathy, unhelped, neglected, perhaps wronged, and then flood their coffins with sunshine? Many a man goes down under the

pressure of life's hardship and the weight of its burdens, never hearing the voice of human sympathy. What matters it to him, when the agony is over and he lies dead on the field, that friends come in throngs to lament his fall and to utter his praises? May it not be that a tithe of the sympathy and appreciation wasted and unavailing now would have kept his heart bravely beating for many another year?

> "How much would I care for it could I know
> That when I am under the grass or snow,
> The raveled garment of life's brief day
> Folded and quietly laid away,
> The spirit let loose from mortal bars
> And somewhere away among the stars,—
> How much do you think it would matter then
> What praise was lavished upon me, when,
> Whatever might be its stint or store,
> It neither could help nor harm me more?"

Do not, then, keep the alabaster boxes of your love and tenderness sealed up until your friends are dead. Fill their lives with sweetness. Speak approving, cheering words while their ears can hear them. The things you mean to say when they are gone say before they go. The flowers you mean to send for their coffins send to brighten and sweeten their homes before they leave them. If a sermon helps you, it will do the preacher good

to tell him of it. If the editor writes an article that you like, he can write a still better one next week if you send him a note of thanks. If a book you read is helpful, do you not owe it to the author to write him a word of acknowledgment? If you know a weary or neglected one or one overwrought, would it not be such work as God's angels love to do to seek to put a little brightness and cheer into his life, to manifest true sympathy with him, and to put into his trembling hand the cup filled with the wine of human love?

I have always said—and I am sure I am speaking for thousands of weary, plodding toilers—that if my friends have vases laid away filled with the perfumes of sympathy and affection which they intend to break over my dead body, I would be glad if they would bring them out in some of my weary hours and open them, that I may be refreshed and cheered by them while I need them. I would rather have a coffin without a flower and a funeral without a spoken eulogy than a life without the sweetness of human tenderness and cheer. If we would fulfill our mission, we must anoint our friends beforehand for their burial. Post-mortem kindnesses do not cheer the burdened spirit. Tears falling on the icy brow make poor and tardy atonement

for coldness and neglect and cruel selfishness in long, struggling years. Appreciation when the heart is stilled has no inspiration for the spirit. Justice comes too late when it is only pronounced in the funeral eulogium. Flowers piled on the coffin cast no fragrance backward over the weary days.

XVII.

THE DUTY OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

THERE are few things to which we need to train ourselves more diligently and conscientiously than to the habit of giving cheer and encouragement.

To many people life is hard. It is full of struggles. It has more of shadow than of sunshine. Its duties are stern and severe. Its burdens press heavily. We know not how many of those whom we meet have been worsted in the struggle of to-day or of yesterday and are cast down or almost in despair. We know not behind what smiling faces are sore hearts. We see not the secret sorrows that weigh like mountains upon many a gentle spirit. We do not understand with what difficulties the paths of many pilgrim feet are beset. There is not a heart without its bitterness Work is hard. Burdens press heavily. Battles are fierce, and are often lost. Hopes fade like

summer roses, leaving disappointment and dead ashes. The constant and invariable gravitation of human hearts is toward discouragement and depression.

An honest watching of our own inner experiences for a week will verify all this, and our personal experience is but a reflection of what is going on all about us. A few lives may be more sunny than ours, while in most the shadows are deeper, the struggles hotter and the path steeper and harder.

While, then, there is so much that is disheartening, it becomes our duty to watch for every opportunity to put a little bit of brightness or better cheer into the lives of those we meet. It would seem to be clear that we should never needlessly utter a discouraging word. The guides caution travelers at certain points on the Alps not to speak even in a whisper, lest the reverberations of their tones should start an avalanche from its perfect poise and send it crashing down. There are hearts so poised on the edge of despair that one dispiriting word will cast them down. It is, therefore, disloyalty to humanity to speak a word whose influence tends to quench hope, to cool life's ardor or to cast a shadow over any sunny heart.

And yet there are many who do not remember this. There are preachers who utter discouraging messages. If a commander, leading his army in battle, were to issue lugubrious proclamations, dwelling upon the difficulties and dangers of the hour, the power of the enemy and the uncertainty of the issue, he would ensure the defeat of his army and the failure of his cause. And yet there are men set to lead in the army of Christ who ever dwell mournfully on the hardships and discouragements of the conflict, with scarcely a brave heroic, hopeful word. Should it not be the office of all who occupy responsible places as leaders, where their every word or tone has a mighty influence over other lives, carefully and conscientiously to refrain from ever uttering one sentence which would check the enthusiasm of any hopeful heart or add to the fear and depression of one who is already downcast? There is enough in life's sorrows and trials to dishearten without this. Men and women need incitement, encouragement, inspiration. Many a church is kept from aggressive work and earnest progress by the discouraging utterances of a timid leader. One of the essential qualifications of leadership is large hopefulness.

Then, in all life's relations, there are many peo-

ple who are always saying disheartening things. Meet them when you may, speak to them on whatever theme you choose, they will leave a depressing influence upon you. They take gloomy views of everything. They are always dominated by discouragements. They see the difficulties first of all in any enterprise or scheme. They regard the present time as the most unpropitious for the undertaking of any new work. This is the most corrupt age the world has ever seen; men never were so depraved; the Church never was so worldly, so shorn of power; there never was so little true piety.

Then touch upon their own personal affairs, and they grow still more gloomy. They air all their griefs. They have a volume of lamentations to pour into your ears. Ask their counsel in any matter of your own or speak to them of any plan of yours, and they will shake their heads and point out to you every unfavorable aspect of it. They seem to live to discourage others, to quench hope, to repress ardor and enthusiasm, to pour darkness into bright lives, and to spread demoralization and panic wherever they move. The chilling influence of such lives it is impossible to estimate. To meet them in the morning is to have a day of depression.

On the other hand, there are those who live to give cheer and encouragement. They may have burdens, or even sore griefs, of their own, but they hide them away deep in their own hearts, not carrying them so as to cast their shadows on any other life. When you meet them, it is as when you go out on a June morning under a cloudless sky, with dewy fragrance breathing all around and bird-songs filling the air. There is a loving radiance in their countenances. Even if you do not know them personally, and merely meet them without salutation on the street, there is something in their expression that leaves a benediction on you whose holy influence follows you all day like the memory of a lovely picture or the refrain of a sweet song. If you have only a greeting as you hurry by, it is so cordial, so hearty, so sincere, that its inspiration tingles all day in your veins. When you talk with them, you do not hear one gloomy word. They take hopeful views of everything. They always find some favorable light in which to view every discouraging event or circumstance. No ardor is quenched, no hope is dimmed, no enthusiasm is repressed in your heart, as you take counsel with them.

They seek to remove difficulties, to open paths,

to inspire fresh courage, to make you stronger, and to add to your determination to succeed. You always go out from a few minutes' talk with them with new impulses stirring in your breast, with lighter step, brighter face, deeper joy, and with the assurance of victory thrilling in your soul.

The ministry of such lives is a most blessed one. What men need most in this world's struggle and strife is not usually direct help, but cheer. A child was seen at a high window in a burning building. A brave fireman started up a ladder to try to rescue it. He had almost gained the window, when the terrible heat appeared too much for him. He seemed to stagger and was about to turn back, when some one in the throng below cried, "Cheer him!" A loud cheer went up, and in a moment more he had the imperiled child in his arm, snatched from an awful death. Many men have fainted and succumbed in great struggles whom one word of cheer would have made strong to overcome.

We should never, then, lose an opportunity to say an inspiring word. We do not know how much it is needed or how great and farreaching its consequences may be. One night long ago, during a terrible storm on the coast of England, a clergyman left his own cozy home, hurried away

to the headland and lighted the beacon. Months afterward he learned that that light had saved a great ship with its freight of human life. We know not to what imperiled interests and hopes our one word or act of encouragement may carry rescue and safety. Nor do we know what destinies may be wrecked and lost by our failure to speak cheer.

In the training and education of the young there is a great call for encouragement. Parents are too apt to criticise their children and find fault with them for the imperfect manner in which they do their work. In too many homes the prevalent temper is that of faultfinding and censure. Is it any wonder that the children sometimes grow discouraged and feel that there is no use in trying to do anything right? They never receive a word of commendation. Nothing that they do is approved. The defects and mistakes in their work are always pointed out, oftentimes impatiently, and no kindly notice is ever taken of any improvement or progress made. Their little plans and ambitions are laughed at. Their day-dreams and childish fancies are ridiculed. No interest is taken in their studies. They are not merely left to struggle along without encouragement or appreciation, but

every budding aspiration is met by the chilling frost of criticism. If we adults had to make headway in life against such repressing influences as many children meet, we should soon faint by the way and give up in despair.

There is a better way. "A kiss from my mother," said Benjamin West, "made me a painter." Had it not been for her approving love and the cheer and encouragement which she gave to him when he showed her his first rude effort, he would never have gone on. A frown, a rebuke, a cold, indifferent criticism or a look or word of ridicule would have so discouraged him that he would never have tried again. No doubt many a grand destiny has been blighted in early youth by discouragement, by disapproval or by a sneer; and, on the other hand, proper encouragement and appreciation woo out the coy and shrinking powers of genius and start men on grand careers.

Wise parents and teachers understand this. They notice every improvement, every mark of progress, and speak approvingly of it. They commend whatever is well done. They never chide for faults or mistakes when the child has done its best. They point out the defects in such a way as not to give pain or to discourage, but rather to

stimulate to new effort. They never laugh at a child's visions or fancies or ridicule its plans, but regard them as the earliest germs of a beautiful life which they must try to woo out. They do not ridicule a child's answers or rebuke its questions. They treat every manifestation of its young life as tenderly as the skillful gardener treats his most delicate plants and flowers. They seek to make it summer about the budding life, so as never to stunt any nascent growth, but to warm and cheer and to call out every lovely possibility of strength and beauty.

A naval officer who rose to high honor relates his first experience under fire. The conflict was very fierce, and at the beginning his terror was very great. He was almost utterly unmanned. The commander of the ship noticed his terror, and, coming to him in the gentlest manner, stood beside him for a few moments and told him of his experience when first called into danger. He assured the young officer that he understood his feelings perfectly and sympathized with him. He then encouraged him with the further assurance that the feeling of dread would soon pass off and his courage would return. Had the commander approached him with stern reproach and rebuke, he

might have become utterly panic-stricken. As it was, his words of sympathy made him brave as a lion.

Thus I read the duty of giving encouragement. It is the sunshine most lives need. Childhood, youth, struggling genius, fainting energy, wearied hope, tempted virtue, breaking hearts,—all are waiting for sympathy and cheer. Those who would do good must learn this secret—pastor, teacher, editor, parent. Disheartening words anywhere are treasonable words. They cause fear, anxiety, panic, loss of courage, rout, disaster.

There are discouragements enough in most lives already. Let us never add to life's burdens, but let us rather at every possible opportunity breathe cheer, fresh incitement, new courage. He that lives thus, even in the lowliest walk, will make brightness and song wherever he goes, and will have a choral entrance into joy at the end.

XVIII.

ON LOVING OTHERS.

NEXT to loving God comes the duty of loving others. Most people find it convenient in practical life to qualify the scope of the law. In the ancient Jewish interpretation enemies were left out; they were to be hated. This made the commandment to love others easy of observance. Without any rabbinical gloss or tradition of the elders to justify us, while we preserve the text in its purity and read it in our Bibles with emphasis and commendation, it is seriously to be questioned whether we follow the commandment much more closely than did the religionists of our Lord's time.

There are some people whom it is not hard to love, and to whom it is quite easy to be kindly affectioned. They are congenial and to our taste. We are drawn to them by their amiable qualities or charming manners, or their treatment of us is so kind and generous as to win our affection. It is easy to love such.

But there are others to whom we are not thus naturally attracted. They are not congenial—perhaps not amiable. They have unlovely or disagreeable traits. Certain faults mar the beauty of their characters or they treat us rudely and unkindly. It is by no means easy for us to bear ourselves toward such with all of love's patience, gentleness, thoughtfulness and helpfulness. And yet it is this that is required of those who would walk in the footsteps of the Lord. Sinners love those who love them. Sinners do good to those who do good to them. Sinners lend to those of whom they hope to receive again. But we are to do more. We are to love our enemies. We are not to select from the mass about us a few to whom the law of love is to be applied. We are to have our special friends, just as Jesus had, to whom our hearts and lives may turn for that deep companionship which all pure and true souls crave; but, like him also, we are to love all and show to all love's holiest offices.

It is not enough to have the love in the heart; we need to look also to its expression. In the bare, jagged trees that stand like naked skeletons in the early spring days there are thousands of intentions of leaf and fruit, but they are folded up and hid-

den away in unopened buds. So, I believe, there are in many lives thoughts and purposes of love which do not reveal themselves. The love is in the heart, but it wants expression. Oftentimes the very reverse of the kindly thought is uttered. From many a lip the petulant word or the tone of bitterness is allowed to escape, while true love dwells deep within the heart.

Most Christian people are better than they seem. There are excellent men whose goodness is rugged and cold like the bare granite rocks. It is strong, firm, true, upright, but lacks the finer graces of the Christliest piety. It is quite possible to love and not be kindly affectioned. There are homes in which there is love that would make any sacrifice, but in which hearts are starving for kindly expression. There is a dearth of those tender words and thoughtful little acts which a true gentleness would suggest. There are fathers who love their children and would give their lives for them who are yet wanting in those kindly expressions which so endear the parental relation. There are friendships that are true enough, but which are not hallowed by those graceful attentions and those tokens of thoughtfulness which cost so little and are worth so much. There are men whose hearts are full of benevolent

dispositions toward the needy, and of sincere sympathy for those who suffer, in whose lives none of these benevolent thoughts or feelings of compassion take practical form. There are men with kindly natures whose manners are gruff and rude. There are others who boast of honest frankness in speech whose words are so harsh or ill-timed as to give immeasurable pain. Then how rare is that wise tact which seems always to know what one is in need of, and comes always at the very right moment with its delicate attention, its unostentatious ministry, its quiet help!

> "The ill-timed truth we might have kept,
> Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?
> The word we had not sense to say,
> Who knows how grandly it had rung?"

There is great need, therefore, of thought with regard to the fitting expression of love. The kindly feeling must find some way to utter itself—a way, too, in keeping with the beauty of the sentiment. Many a lovely thought loses all its loveliness when clothed in speech or act. The benevolence of the heart must show itself in amiability of deportment and in deeds of mercy. Manner is as important as matter. The gruff man can never impart

much happiness to others. Kindness must be kindly expressed.

The true test of Christian love is in life's closer relations. There is a great difference between loving people we never saw, and never shall see, and those with whom we mingle continually in actual contact. There are some persons whose souls glow with love for the benighted heathen far away who fail utterly in loving their nearest neighbors or those who jostle against them every day in business and in society. No doubt it is easier to love some people at a distance. Distance lends enchantment to many lives, just as a far-away rugged landscape may seem charmingly picturesque. We cannot see their faults and blemishes. We are not required to endure their uncongenial or disagreeable qualities. We do not meet them in the rivalries of business or chafings of social life. We see nothing of the petty meanness and selfishness that closer association would reveal in them. Our lives are not impinged upon at any point by theirs, and there can therefore be no friction. If we were brought into close association with them, our interest in them might be lessened. Many men who have been excellent friends while meeting occasionally and in favorable circumstances

have ceased to be friends when brought into close contact in the attritions of daily life. There are few characters that will bear the microscopic lens.

But the test of true Christian love is that it does not fail even in the closest relations, in the most trying frictions of actual life, in which men so often appear at their worst. Charity beareth all things and never faileth. When hitherto undisclosed and unsuspected faults or blemishes appear in one we have esteemed, we are not to love him the less. Disagreeable qualities may appear upon closer acquaintance which will break the charm that distance lent and sorely test the genuineness of our love. There may be faults or eccentricities which painfully mar the beauty of men's characters, rendering them uncongenial. Their actions toward us may give us apparent cause for withholding from them that courtesy and kindness which it is our wont to manifest to all men.

And yet none of these things modify the law of love or abridge its application. In all our intercourse with them our treatment of them is to be in the spirit of the sweetest charity. No rudeness of theirs must provoke us to rudeness in return. No matter how distasteful to our spirits their habits or manners may be, we are to treat

them with unvarying courtesy. Even wrongs and injustice on their part toward us are to be answered only by that love that beareth all things and is not easily provoked, by the soft answer that turneth away wrath, and by the meekness that when reviled revileth not again.

The law of love, however, is not to be tortured into applications never intended. We are not required to take all sorts of people into intimate companionship or sacred friendship. There are many from whom we are commanded to separate ourselves. Even among the good our hearts are permitted to have choice of their affinities. Yet we are to cherish love toward all. In the face of the most repulsive qualities, even under the deepest wrongs, we are still to maintain and exhibit love in all its tenderness, patience, thoughtfulness, compassion and helpfulness—not the love which calls evil good, but the love that desires for others the blessings which we seek for ourselves.

To help in bearing with disagreeable people or those with unamiable qualities, there is nothing better than a sincere wish to do them good. There is a better side to every marred or distorted character. Hidden away under the blemishes are the germs and possibilities of a noble and beautiful

life. Christ sees under the most faulty exterior that which by his grace he can exalt into heavenly sainthood. We should look even upon the worst men in the same way, and hold it to be our errand to them to help to bring out in them the possible beauty. There is a key somewhere to unlock any and every heart, and a hand that can bring betterment to every life. If we meet men and women, no matter how distorted their character, with a sincere desire to help and to bless them, we shall find it an easy task to bear with them and treat them lovingly.

Longfellow says, "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility." We always feel kindly and speak softly in the presence of suffering. There is something in us that prompts us to extend sympathy and help to one that has sorrow. To remember that in every life there are hidden griefs would go far to help us to observe toward all the law of love.

An artist used to say to his pupils, "The end of the day is the proof of the picture." He meant that the most favorable time to judge of the excellence of a painting is the twilight-hour, when there is not light enough to distinguish details. Then

defects in execution cannot be seen, and the artist's thought glows in its richest beauty. In like manner, the close of the day of life is the truest time to look at human character. In the noon glare all men's faults appear. Jealousies, emulations and rivalries show us to each other in the heat of clashing, conflicting life in most unfavorable light. We are apt to put the worst construction upon each other's actions and motives. We see each other through the defective and distorting vision of our own selfishness. All the evil appears magnified, and many of the better things are unperceived or shown in false settings. But when the shadows of the evening of eternity begin to fall upon us, we see each other with the asperities softened and the blemishes covered by the veil of charity. When the fierce competitions are hushed we see men in truer light. We do justice then to their virtues and better qualities. Envy and prejudice in us no longer magnify the evil that is in them, while the good shines out in transfigured splendor.

When we sit beside a man's death-bed we have no harsh judgments to pronounce. Beauties appear which we had never observed before, and imperfections fade out in the softening, mellowing glow that streams from the gates of the eternal

world. How kindly we feel toward him in that hour! Can we not learn to look at men always as we shall at the close of the day? Then it will be easy to feel and to exhibit toward all that love that never faileth, that thinketh no evil, that hopeth all things.

XIX.

THOUGHTFULNESS AND TACT.

"Evil is wrought by want of thought
As well as want of heart."

SOME people have a wonderful way of always speaking a kind word or doing a kind act at the right time—just when it is most needed and will do the greatest good. No matter when we meet them, they seem, as by some unfailing inspiration, to understand our mood and to have something precisely suited to it—a bit of sunshine for our gloom, a word of cheer for our disheartenment, a gentle but never offensive reminder of duty if we are growing remiss or neglectful, an impulse to activity if our zeal is flagging, or a word of generous commendation and delicate praise if we are weary and overwrought.

There is a wondrous power in fitness. A kindness that, standing apart from its occasion, seems utterly insignificant takes on importance and as-

sumes an inestimable value because of its opportuneness. It multiplies one's usefulness a hundredfold, a thousandfold, to know how to speak the right word or do the right thing just at the right moment and in the right way.

Many people with the very best motives and intentions and with truly large capacity for doing good almost utterly fail of usefulness and throw their lives away because they lack this gift of tact. They perform their kindest deeds in such an inappropriate way as to rob them of nearly all their power to comfort or cheer. They always come a few minutes too late to be helpful. They speak the wrong word, giving pain when they wanted to give pleasure. They are always making allusions to themes on which no word should be spoken. They are ever touching sensitive spots. When they enter a home of sorrow, drawn by the truest sympathy, they are almost sure to make tender hearts bleed the more by some want of fitness in word or act. They are continually hurting the feelings of their friends, offending nearly every person they meet and leaving frowns and tears in their path. Every one gives them credit for honesty of intention, and yet their efforts to do good mostly come to naught or even result in harm. The sad part of it all is

that their motives are good and their hearts full of benevolent desires. Their lives are failures because they lack the proper touch and do not know in what manner to do the things they resolve to do.

Others may not have one whit more sincere or earnest desire to be useful. Their interest in people may be no truer, their sympathy no deeper, their love no warmer. They may have less rather than more natural power to give help. Yet because of their peculiar and gentle tact they scatter gladness all about them and are ever performing sweet ministries of good. Their suggestions of kindness do not come to them as after-thoughts when it is too late to render any help. They do not blunder into all sorts of cruelty when they try to alleviate sorrow. They come opportunely, like God's angels. Their thoughtfulness seems intuitively to understand just what will be the best word to speak or the kindest and fittest thing to do.

When they are guests in a home, they have a way of showing a grateful appreciation of the favors and attentions bestowed upon them, and yet in so delicate a way as never to appear to flatter. When they feel it necessary to remind another of some remissness in duty, they do it so gently as

not to lose the friend, but to draw him all the closer. They possess the art of manifesting an interest—not feigned, but sincere—in each one they meet, and succeed in leaving a pleasant impression and a benign influence upon all.

There are some who regard tact as insincerity or hypocrisy. They boast of their own honesty, which never tries to disguise a dislike for a person, which bluntly criticises another's faults even at the price of his friendship. They believe in *truth* in all its bare ruggedness, no matter how much pain it may give, and condemn all that thoughtful art which regards human feelings and tries to speak the truth in such a way that it may not wound and estrange. They love to quote the woe against those of whom all men speak well, and that other saying of our Lord's—that he had not come to send peace, but a sword. Their favorite prophet is Elijah, and they refer often to the biblical condemnation of certain who prophesied smooth things. They mistake bluntness for sincerity. In the name of candor they employ sarcasm or sharp and bitter personalities. When others are grieved or hurt or insulted, they answer, "I am a blunt man; I say what I mean, and you must excuse me." Frankness is to be honored, but this is not frankness; it is imper-

tinence, cruel unkindness, the outbreak of bad nature in him who speaks, which, instead of doing good, works only harm.

A true appreciation of the story of the teachings of the gospel will reveal the fact that our Lord himself exercised the most beautiful and thoughtful tact in all his mingling among the people. He was utterly incapable of rudeness. He never needlessly spoke a harsh word. He never gave needless pain to a sensitive heart. He was most considerate of human weakness. He was most gentle toward all human sorrow. He never suppressed the truth, but he uttered it always in love. Even the terrible woes he pronounced against unbelief and hypocrisy I do not believe were spoken in the tones of thunder trembling with rage which men impart to their anathemas. I think we must read them in the light of his tears over the city of his love, which had rejected him, pulsing and tremulous with divine and sorrowing tenderness. His whole life tells of most considerate thoughtfulness. He had a wondrous reverence for human life. Every scrap of humanity was sacred and precious in his eyes. He bore himself always in the attitude of tenderest regard for every one. How could it be otherwise, since he saw in every one a lost being whom by love he

might win and rescue, or whom by a harsh word he might drive for ever beyond hope? He never spoke brusquely or made truth cruel. He saw in every man and woman enough of sadness to soften the very tones of his speech and to produce feelings of ineffable tenderness in him. He moved about striving to impart to every one some comfort or help.

If we can but realize, even in the feeblest way, the feeling of Christ toward men, our bluntness and rudeness will soon change to gentleness. And this is true tact. It is infinitely removed from cunning. Cunning is insincere. It flatters and practices all the arts of deception. It professes a friendship and interest it does not feel. It seeks only to promote its own ends. It is selfish at the core, and utterly wretched and debasing.

True tact is sanctified common sense. It i Christian love doing its proper and legitimate work. It is that wisdom which our Lord commended so heartily to the disciples as they went out among enemies and into a hostile world. It is at the same time harmless as a dove. No one can read the New Testament thoughtfully without seeing how love moves everywhere as the queen of all the graces. Truth is everywhere clothed in the warm and radi-

ant beauty of charity. Positive, strong and mighty, it is ever gentle as the touch of a child's finger. Some one has said that whoever makes truth unpleasant commits high treason against virtue. The remark needs a qualification. There are unpleasant truths that must cause pain when faithfully spoken. Yet truth itself is always lovely, and we are not loyal to it when we present it in any way that will make it appear repulsive.

Christian tact is wise and loving thoughtfulness. It is that charity which is wisely gentle to all, which beareth all things, which seeketh not her own, which thinketh no evil. It has an instinctive desire to avoid giving pain. It seeks to please all men for their good. It knows very well that the surest way not to do men good is to antagonize them and excite their opposition and enmity; therefore, as far as possible, it avoids all direct attack upon the life and opinions of others. It shows respect for the views of those who differ in sentiment or belief. A wise writer has said, "When we would show any one that he is mistaken, our best course is to observe on what side he considers the subject—for his view of it is generally right on his side—and admit to him that he is right so far. He will be satisfied with this acknowledgment that he was

not wrong in his judgment, though inadvertent in not looking at the whole of the case." How much wiser and more effective this method than that of violently assaulting the position of one who differs from us, as if we were infallible and he and his opinions were worthy only of our contempt! We can accomplish by indirection what we could never do by direct methods.

In no class of work is this wise tact so much needed as in trying to lead men to Christ. There is somewhere a key to every heart, and yet there are good and earnest men to whom no heart opens. They have zeal without knowledge. Sanctified tact shows its skill in a thousand little ways which no rules can mark out, but which win hearts and find acceptance for the living truth and for the wondrous love of Christ. I believe it will be seen in the end that many lives which might have been saved by the gentle methods which love teaches have drifted away from Christ and been lost through the unwisdom of workers.

Tact has a wonderful power in smoothing out tangled affairs. A pastor, with it, will harmonize a church composed of most discordant elements, and prevent a thousand strifes and quarrels by saying the right word at the right time and by

quietly and wisely setting other influences to work to neutralize the discordant tendencies. A teacher possessed of this gift can control the most unruly pupils and disarm mischief of its power to annoy and disturb the peace. In the home it is a most indispensable oil. Quiet tact will always have the soft word ready to speak in time to turn away anger. It knows how to avoid unsafe ground. It can put all parties into a good humor when there is danger of difference or clashing. It is silent when silence is better than speech.

Nothing else has so much to do with the success or failure of men in usefulness as the possession or non-possession of tact. A man with great gifts and learning accomplishes nothing, while another, with not one-half of his natural powers or acquirements, far outstrips him in practical life. The difference lies in tact—in knowing the art of doing things. We need more than brains and erudition. The talent of all which tells most effectively in life is that which teaches us *how to use the power we have.* One person will do more good without learning than another with his brain full of the lore of the ages.

Tact is no doubt largely a natural endowment, but it is also partly an art, and can be cultivated.

The awkward man who is always swinging himself against some one or treading down some tender flower may acquire something of the grace of easy carriage. The harsh, brusque man may get a softer heart, and with it a softer manner. The man who is always saying the wrong word and paining some one may at least learn to be silent on doubtful occasions. There is no better way to acquire this wonder-working tact than by becoming filled with the spirit of Christ. Warm love in the heart for all men, unselfish, thoughtful, kind, will always find some beautiful way to perform its beneficent ministries.

A delicate kindness moves us more than the sublimest exhibition of power. Gentleness is mightier than noise or force. The tiny flower growing high up on the cold, rugged mountain, amid ice and snow, impresses the beholder more than the great piles of granite that tower to the clouds. The soft shining of the sun can do more than the rude blast to make men unfasten their heavy garments and open their hearts to the influences of good.

XX.

MUTUAL FORBEARANCE.

AMONG all Christian duties, there are few that touch life at more points than the duty of mutual forbearance, and there are few that, in the observance or the breach, have more to do with the happiness or the unhappiness of life. We cannot live our lives solitarily. We are made to be social beings. It is in our intercourse with others that we find our sweetest pleasures and our purest earthly joys. Yet close by these springs of happiness are other fountains that do not yield sweetness. There often are briers on the branches from which we gather the most luscious fruits. Were human nature perfect, there could be nothing but most tender pleasure in the mutual comminglings of life. But we are all imperfect and full of infirmities. There are qualities in each one of us that are not beautiful—many that are annoying to others. Self rules in greater or less measure in the

best of us. In our busy and excited lives we are continually liable to jostle against each other. Our individual interests conflict, or seem to conflict. The things we do in the earnest pressing of our own business and our own plans and efforts seem at times to interfere with the interests of others. In the heat of emulation and the warmth of self-interest we are apt to do things which injure others.

Then, in our closer personal contact, in society and in business relations, we are constantly liable to give pain or offence. We sometimes speak quickly and give expression to thoughtless words which fall like sparks on other inflammable tempers. Even our nearest and truest friends do things that grieve us. Close commingling of imperfect lives always has its manifold little injustices, wrongs, oppressions, slights and grievances.

Then we do not always see each other in clear and honest light. We are prone to have a bias toward self, and often misconstrue the bearing, words or acts of others. Many of us, too, are given to little petulances and expressions of ill-humor or bad temper which greatly lessen the probabilities of unbroken fellowship.

Thus it comes about that no Christian grace is

likely to be called into play more frequently than that of mutual forbearance. Without it there can really exist no close and lasting friendly relations in a society composed of imperfect beings. Even the most tender intimacies and the holiest associations require the constant exercise of patience. If we resent every apparent injustice, demand the righting of every little wrong, and insist upon chafing and uttering our feelings at every infinitesimal grievance, and if all the other parties in the circle claim the same privilege, what miserable beings we shall all be, and how wretched life will become!

But there is a more excellent way. The spirit of love inculcated in the New Testament will, if permitted to reign in each heart and life, produce fellowship without a jar or break.

We need to guard first of all against a critical spirit. It is very easy to find fault with people. It is possible, even with ordinary glasses, to see many things in one another that are not what they ought to be. Then some people carry microscopes fine enough to reveal a million animalculæ in a drop of water, and with these they can find countless blemishes in the character and conduct even of the most saintly dwellers on the earth.

There are some who are always watching for slights and grievances. They are suspicious of the motives and intentions of others. They are always imagining offences, even where none were most remotely intended. This habit is directly at variance with the law of love, which thinketh no evil.

We turn to the Pattern. Does Christ look upon us sharply, critically, suspiciously? He sees every infirmity in us, but it is as though he did not see it. His love overlooks it. He throws a veil over our faults. He continues to pour his own love upon us in spite of all our blemishes and our ill-treatment of him. The law of Christian forbearance requires the same in us. We must not keep our selfish suspicions ever on the watch-tower or at the windows, looking out for neglects, discourtesies, wrongs, or grievances of any kind. We must not be hasty to think evil of others. We had better be blind, not perceiving at all the seeming rudeness or insult. It is well not to hear all that is said, or, if hear we must, to be as though we heard not.

Many bitter quarrels have grown out of an imagined slight, many out of an utter misconception, or perchance from the misrepresentation of some wretched gossipmonger. Had a few moments been

given to ascertain the truth, there had never been any occasion for ill-feeling.

We should seek to know the motive also which prompts the apparent grievance. In many cases the cause of our grievance is utterly unintentional, chargeable to nothing worse than thoughtlessness—possibly meant even for kindness. It is never fair to judge men by every word they speak or everything they do in the excitement and amid the irritations of busy daily life. Many a gruff man carries a good heart and a sincere friendship under his coarse manner. The best does not always come to the surface. We should never, therefore, hastily imagine evil intention in others. Nor should we allow ourselves to be easily persuaded that our companions or friends meant to treat us unkindly. A disposition to look favorably upon the conduct of our fellow-men is a wonderful absorber of the frictions of life.

Then there are always cases of real injustice. There are rudenesses and wrongs which we cannot regard as merely imaginary or as misconceptions. They proceed from bad temper or from jealousy or malice, and are very hard to bear. Kindness is repaid with unkindness. We find impatience and petulance in our best friends. There are

countless things every day in our associations with others which tend to vex or irritate us.

Here is room for the fullest exercise of that divinely-beautiful charity which covers a multitude of sins in others. We seek to make every possible excuse for the neglect or rudeness or wrong. Perhaps our friend is carrying some perplexing care or some great burden to-day. Something may be going wrong in his business or at his home. Or it may be his unstrung nerves that make him so thoughtless and inconsiderate. Or his bad health may be the cause. A large-hearted spirit will always seek to find some palliation at least for the apparent wrong.

Another step in the school of forbearance is the lesson of keeping silent under provocation. One person alone can never make a quarrel: it takes two. A homely counsel to a newly-married couple was that they should never both be angry at the same time—that one should always remain calm and tranquil. There is a still diviner counsel which speaks of the soft answer which turneth away wrath. If we cannot have the soft answer always ready, we can at least learn not to answer at all. Our Lord met nearly all the insults he received with patient uncomplaining silence. He

was like a lamb dumb before the shearer. All the keen insults of the cruel throng wrung from him no word of resentment, no look of impatience. As the fragrant perfume but gives forth added sweetness when crushed, so cruelty, wrong and pain only made him the gentler and the love that always distinguished him the sweeter.

It is a majestic power, this power of keeping silent. Great is the conqueror who leads armies to victories. Mighty is the strength that captures a city. But he is greater who can rule his own spirit. There are men who can command armies, but cannot command themselves. There are men who by their burning words can sway vast multitudes who cannot keep silence under provocation or wrong. The highest mark of nobility is self-control. It is more kingly than regal crown and purple robe.

> "Not in the clamor of the crowded street,
> Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng,
> But in ourselves, are triumph and defeat."

There are times when silence is golden, when words mean defeat, and when victory can be gained only by answering not a word. Many of the painful quarrels and much of the bitterness of what

we call so often "incompatibility of temper" would never be known if we would learn to keep silence when others wrong us. We may choke back the angry word that flies to our lips. The insult unanswered will recoil upon itself and be its own destruction.

There is also a wonderful opportunity here for the play of good nature. There are some people whose abounding humor always comes to their relief when they observe the gathering of a storm, and they will have a little story ready, or will suddenly turn the conversation entirely away from the inflammable subject, or will make some bright or playful remark that will cause the whole trouble to blow off in a hearty laugh. It would not seem impossible for all to learn to bear insults or grievances in some of these ways, either in silence—not sullen, thunder-charged, but loving silence—or by returning the soft answer which will quench the flame of anger, or by that wise tact which drives out the petulant humor by the expulsive power of a new emotion.

There are at least two motives which should be sufficient to lead us to cultivate this grace of forbearance. One is that no insult can do us harm unless we allow it to irritate us. If we

endure even the sorest words as Jesus endured his wrongs and revilings, they will not leave one trace of injury upon us. They can harm us only when we allow ourselves to become impatient or angry. We can get the victory over them, utterly disarm them of power to do us injury, by holding ourselves superior to them. The feeling of resentment will change to pity when we remember that not he who is wronged, but he who does the wrong, is the one who suffers. Every injustice or grievance reacts and leaves a stain and a wound. All the cruelties and persecutions that human hate could inflict would not leave one trace of real harm upon us, but every feeling of resentment admitted into our hearts, every angry word uttered, will leave a stain. Forbearance thus becomes a perfect shield which protects us from all the cruelties and wrongs of life.

The other motive is drawn from our relation to God. We sin against him continually, and his mercy never fails. His love bears with all our neglect, forgetfulness, ingratitude and disobedience, and never grows impatient with us. We live only by his forbearance. The wrongs he endures from us are infinite in comparison with the trivial grievances we must endure from our fellow-men. When

we think of this, can we grow impatient of the little irritations of daily fellowship? We are taught to pray every day, "Forgive us our debts *as we forgive* our debtors." How can we pray this petition sincerely and continue to be exacting, resentful, revengeful, or even to be greatly pained by the unkind treatment of others?

The Koran says that two angels guard every man on the earth, one watching on either side of him; and when at night he sleeps, they fly up to heaven with a written report of all his words and actions during the day. Every good thing he has done is recorded at once and repeated ten times, lest some item may be lost or omitted from the account. But when they come to a sinful thing, the angel on the right says to the other, "Forbear to record that for seven hours; peradventure, as he wakes and thinks in the quiet hours, he may be sorry for it, and repent and pray and obtain forgiveness." This is a true picture of the way in which God regards our lives. He is slow to see our sins or to write them down against us. He delights in mercy. We are to repeat in our lives as his children something at least of his patience. The song of forgiveness and forbearance which he sings into our hearts we are to echo forth again.

XXI.

MANLY MEN.

"Let my early dreams come true
With the good I fain would do;
Clothe with life my weak intent,
Let me be the thing I meant."

CHRISTIAN life is more than a tender sentiment. Christian character is more than gentleness, patience, meekness, humility, kindness. There are some men who have these qualities who lack the more robust characteristics of manhood. They are weak, nerveless, spiritless. They are wanting in courage, force, energy and that indefinable quality called *grit*. Their gentleness is the gentleness of weakness. They are not manly men. Their virtues are of the passive kind, and they lack those active, positive traits that give men power and make them strong to stand and resistless when they move. Such persons have no strength of conviction. Holding their opinions lightly, their grasp of them is easily relaxed. They

are remarkable for their forbearance and meekness, thus illustrating one phase of true Christly character, but they serve only as moral buffers in society to deaden the force of the concussion produced by other men's passions. They generate no motion, they kindle no enthusiasm, they inspire no courage, they make no aggression against the world's hosts of evil. They are good men. They have the patience of Job, the meekness of Moses, the amiability of John, but they want the boldness of Peter, the enthusiasm of Paul and the moral heroism of Luther superadded to their passive virtues to make them truly strong men.

There is another class of defects sometimes found in men of very gentle spirit. They possess many of those qualities of disposition that are most highly commended in the Scriptures. They are not easily provoked. They speak the soft answer that turneth away wrath. They endure well the rough experiences of life. They are gentle to all men and full of kindness, and yet they are wanting in the quality of perfect *truthfulness*. They are neither false nor dishonest in great matters, but in countless minor matters they are characterized by a disregard of that exact truthfulness which the religion of Christ requires. They are not careful to keep

their engagements. They are ready to promise any favor asked of them—they have not the courage to say "No!" to a request—but they frequently fail to fulfill what they so readily promise. They are unpunctual men, late at meetings, keeping others waiting at appointments, and often failing altogether to appear after the most positive engagement to attend. We can readily forgive the cruelty of that facetious editor who recently wrote a tearful "In Memoriam" of one of these unpunctual men, speaking of him as the "*late* Mr. Blank."

These late people are frequently careless, too, about paying little debts. In charity, I think, "careless" is the proper word, for they do not intend to defraud any one, but have permitted themselves to grow into a loose habit of doing business. They make little purchases or borrow little sums of money from friends, faithfully promising to pay or return the amount in a day or two, but neglecting to do so, until by and by the matter fades altogether from their memory. They borrow books also, if they chance to be of a literary turn of mind, and other articles of various kinds, pledging themselves to return the same in a very little time; and many an empty place in a library and many a missing article in a household pro-

claim either a great many bad memories or a painful want of conscientiousness in borrowers.

There is still another class of blemishes for which I can find no more gentle designation than the word *meannesses*. No other faults detract more from the nobleness of manhood, and yet it must be confessed with shame that none are more common. A man seems to possess an excellent character as beheld from a little distance. He has many elements of power, traits of usefulness, perhaps even of greatness; but when drawn close to him into intimate personal relations, you discover evidences of meanness which you had not suspected before. As a friend he is disingenuous. Through all the guise of good profession the marks of selfishness and self-seeking appear. He uses his friends to further his own personal interests, and cares not that they suffer loss provided he himself is benefited. He is not loyal to those to whom he professes such unfaltering devotion, but speaks freely in whispers to others of their faults, disclosing many a matter entrusted to him or learned by him in the sacredness of close friendship. If he wishes anything accomplished that involves risk of reputation, he puts some other one forward to do the unpleasant work, to bear the odium or take the sneers

and reproach, while he quietly steps in to reap the advantage.

In business he is close and hard. He never pays a debt cheerfully, without protest or question. He treats every creditor as if he were an enemy or a conspirator and as if his bills were fraudulent or unjust. He takes every advantage in a bargain. He higgles for the lowest penny when he is to pay, and the highest when he is making the sale. He counts the fractions of cents in his own favor. To his employés he pays the minimum of wages, while he extorts from them the maximum of work. He is suspicious of the honesty of every one, quoting often the old aphorism of meanness: "Till you know that a man is honest, treat him as a rogue." His meanness creeps out, too, in many very small things. He always pays out the most ragged bill he has or the smooth or notched coin, reserving the bright, clean notes and the new coins for himself. He accepts compliments, dinners and other favors and kindnesses, but never returns them. He borrows his neighbor's newspaper to save the expense of buying one for himself. But to no one is he so mean as to the Lord and to his church. When the contribution-box is passed, he selects the smallest bit of money in his pocket to

give. When subscriptions are asked, he puts down the least amount that will be received, and then, if possible, will in the end evade payment altogether. He is a small-souled, grasping, narrow-spirited man. He lives only for self, and even his selfishness overreaches itself, for in the eyes of all mankind nothing is more despicable than meanness, and nothing brings back poorer and more beggarly returns.

All of these are unmanly qualities. It does not meet the case to say that they are minor faults, that we ought not to be hypercritical, that we should have that large charity which covers even multitudes of blemishes. When right and wrong are involved, there are no little things. A star seems a mere speck to our poor vision, but to God's eye it is a vast burning sun. The evils that we deem so minute, in Heaven's sight are infinite. There is only one pattern on which we must fashion our lives, and in that there is no fault. The word of God in its divine requirements makes no provision for blemishes, though they be the smallest.

Then a little thought will show any one that even the most trivial of these things do not only mar the beauty of the character as seen by others, but also destroy the influence of the person in the

community. A man who becomes known as unfaithful to his promises and appointments, or as careless in meeting his obligations, in paying his debts and in returning what he has borrowed, soon wins for himself a very unenviable reputation. Such a man has no power for good. He may preach the gospel or exhort in meetings or teach in the Sabbath-school, but his words avail nothing, because his character is worm-eaten and he has lost the confidence and respect of his neighbors. All his goodness and well-meaning go for nothing while even in the smallest matters he is known to be untruthful and dishonest, to evade paying his debts, or even to be careless of his promises and pledges.

Who has not known the usefulness of many an otherwise excellent man utterly destroyed by a negligent disregard of his obligations and engagements? Who has any true respect for a mean man? Meanness defeats its own object and wins contempt. Even as a matter of worldly policy it is fatal unwisdom. Nothing wins in the marts like generosity. And in the matter of manly character it is a most despicable blemish. The world will forget and forgive almost anything sooner than meanness. One exhibition of such a spirit in a

Christian does incalculable harm to his influence, and habitual meanness in a little while utterly wastes his power for usefulness. How long can a sneaking, evasive, gossipy person have true friends or retain the respect of those who know him?

We may call these trivial blemishes, and it may seem hard that, while a man is good in the staple of his character, he should be made to suffer for such minor faults—mere negligence of habit, mayhap, or mere accidents of education—but the fact stares us in the face, and must be accepted as inexorable. Even the ethics of the world condemns these things as unmanly, and the character that suffers itself to be tarnished by them must pay the penalty in diminished or utterly destroyed influence for good.

It is worth our while to study closely the character of true manliness as we have its type and pattern in the life of our Lord. We soon learn that while in him love blossomed out in all that is rich and beautiful in human tenderness and gentleness, it did not leave him weak and strengthless. Never was any other man so full of compassion, so pitiful toward those who had wandered, so patient in bearing wrong or so forgiving toward his en-

emies. But you seek in vain in all his life for the faintest trace of moral feebleness. To him sin in any form was unutterably abhorrent. Truth shone in every lineament of his soul. He was the embodiment of courage. All the active virtues, as well as the passive, were exhibited in him. He was not merely a patient sufferer; he set a-going in the world the mightiest forces of divinity—forces whose resistless momentum has penetrated all the world's life, and which even at the distance of nineteen centuries have lost none of their energy or vitality. He was not a weak man swept along by the strong currents of the world's passions to an unavoidable destiny. So he sometimes appears to superficial observation, but so he was not. Every step was voluntary. His was the sublime march of a king. He had all power and was always active, never passive even in what seem the most helpless hours of his life. He laid down his life; he had power to lay it down. Even in dying he was active, voluntarily giving up his life.

We cannot study enough this sometimes neglected phase of Christ's life—the force and positiveness of his character. Patient to endure, there was yet power enough in his gentlest word to make it a living influence for uncounted centuries. His

most passive moments were marked by exhibitions of omnipotence. Submitting to the arresting band, he yet put forth his hand to work a miracle of healing. On his cross he opened heaven's gates to a penitent soul.

Then he was in every way the manliest of men—large-hearted, noble-spirited, generous to the very uttermost of self-sacrifice. No microscopic eye can find in all his life a trace of selfishness or one token of meanness.

Such is the Pattern, and a Christian man must be strong as well as tender. The active virtues must be cultivated as well as the passive. Meekness must not be weakness. The soft speech must not be the timid utterance of moral feebleness. Like the mighty engine which can polish a needle or cut a bar of iron, a Christian man must have a touch as gentle as an infant's and yet possess the courage of a hero to smite evil and to do the Lord's work. With the charity that beareth all things and endureth all things he must have the force of character which will make his influence a mighty positive power for good. Truth must be wrought into the very grain and fibre of his manhood. His word must be pure as gold. His lightest promises must be as sacredly kept as his most solemn engagements.

He must be a large-hearted, generous man, unselfish, noble-spirited, above all suspicion of meanness. He must be scrupulously exact in all his dealings, promptly returning what he has borrowed, paying his debts the very day they are due, never seeking to evade them, never forgetting them, nor postponing payment till the very latest time. He must not be a hard man, close, oppressive, domineering, despotic. In a word, he must combine unflinching integrity, unvarying promptness and punctuality and conscientious truthfulness with generosity and liberality.

Such a man will grow into a marvelous power in the community in which he lives. People will believe in his religion because he lives it. No one will sneer when he exhorts others to be honest, upright and true, prompt and punctual, and faithful to utmost scrupulousness to their engagements. His life is one unflawed crystal. He is a manly man. Even the enemies of religion respect him. His simplest words are weighty. His whole influence is for truth and nobleness. His daily life is a sermon. God is honored and the world is blessed by his living.

XXII.

BOOKS AND READING.

"The wish falls often warm upon my heart that I may learn nothing here that I cannot continue in the other world—that I may do nothing here but deeds that will bear fruit in heaven."

RICHTER.

IT is said that it would require hundreds of years to read the titles alone of all the books in the world's libraries. Even of those that issue each year from the press newly written, one person can read but a very meagre percentage. It is therefore a physical impossibility to read all the books which the art of printing has put within our reach. Even if our whole time were to be devoted to reading, we could in our brief years peruse but a very small portion of them. Then it must be considered that in these busy days, when active duties press so imperiously, the most of us can devote but a few hours each day at the best to reading, and very many find, not hours, but minutes only, for this

purpose. There are hosts of busy people who cannot read more than a score of books in a year.

It is settled, therefore, for us all, that we must be content to leave the great mass of printed books unread. Even those who are favored with most leisure cannot read one in a thousand or ten thousand of the books that offer themselves. And those whose hands are full of activities can scarcely touch the great mountain of printed matter that looms up invitingly before them.

The important question, then, is, On what principle should we select out of this great wilderness of literature the books we shall read? If I can read but a dozen volumes this year, how am I to determine what volumes of the thousands they shall be?

For all books are not alike good. There are books that are not worth reading at all. Then, of those that are good, the value is relative. The simplest wisdom teaches that we should choose those which will repay us most richly. Let us look at some principles relating to this subject which are worthy of consideration.

There are books that are tainted with impurity. Of course all such are to be excluded from our catalogue. We can no more afford to read a vile

book, however daintily and delicately the vileness may be draped, than we can afford to admit an impure companionship into our lives. Perhaps the most of us are not sufficiently careful in this matter. The country is flooded with publications, oftentimes attractively prepared, elaborately illustrated, their impurity concealed under harmless titles, but in which lurks the fatal poison of moral death. Many good people are beguiled into reading books or papers of this class as a recreation. When we remember that everything we read leaves its impression upon our inner life and makes its enduring mark upon our character, the importance of this subject appears. The geologist will take you to some old rock-formation, and will show you, on what was once the shore of an ancient sea, the traces left by the waves, the tracks of the bird that walked along in the sand one day, and the print of the leaf that fell and lay there. The shore hardened into rock, and the rock holds every trace through all these centuries. So it is in character-building. Everything that we take into our life leaves its permanent impression.

Then, when we consider the subject from a Christian view-point, it becomes even more important. Our work here is spiritual culture. We are to

keep most sedulous watch over our hearts that nothing shall tarnish their purity. We are to admit into our minds nothing that may dim our spiritual vision or break in any degree the continuity of our communion with God; and it is well known that any corrupt thing, admitted even for a moment into our thoughts, not only stains our mind, but leaves a memory that may draw a trail of stain after it for ever. It is related of a celebrated painter that he could not look upon a disgusting object when engaged in his work without seeing the effect of it in the productions of his brush and pencil afterward. A distinguished clergyman, in speaking of the effect upon the mind of reading certain classes of literature, gives a bit of his own experience. He was beguiled into reading a number of the works of a popular writer which were not supposed to have any irreligion in them, but he could not preach with any comfort for six months afterward. If we would keep the tender joy of our heart-experiences unbroken, we must hold the most rigid watch over our reading, conscientiously excluding not only all that is obviously impure, but all in which lurks even a suggestion of wrong.

Then there are books that are free from immoral

taint that we must exclude also unless we want to throw away our time and waste our opportunities for improvement. They are unobjectionable on moral grounds, but are vapid, frivolous, empty. There are many popular novels that have even a sort of religious odor which yet teach nothing, give no upward impulse, furnish no food for thought, add no additional fact to our store of knowledge, leave no touch of beauty. There is nothing in them. There is a great demand in these days for this easy kind of reading. It agrees well with the indolent disposition of many who want nothing that requires close application or vigorous thinking or patient, earnest mental toil. It is not directly harmful. It could not be indicted for bad moral quality or influence. It leaves no *débris* of vile rubbish behind. It may be orthodox, full of sentimental talk *about* religion and of pious moralizing on sundry duties. It starts no impure suggestion. It teaches no false doctrine or wrong principle. It debauches no conscience. It flows over our souls like soft sentimental music.

And yet it is decidedly evil in its effects upon mind and heart. It imparts no vigor. It ministers to none of the functions of life. Then it

vitiates the appetite, enervates the mind and destroys all taste for anything solid and substantial in literature. It so enfeebles the powers of attention, thought, memory and all the intellectual machinery that there is no ability left to grapple with really important subjects. Next to the great evil produced by impure and tainted literature comes the debilitating influence of the enormous flood of trashy, worthless publications filling the country.

If we can read in our brief, busy years but a very limited number of books of any kind, should not those few be the very best, richest, most substantial and useful that we can find in the whole range of literature? If one hundred books lie before me and I have time to read but one of them, if I am wise will I not select that one which will bring to me the largest amount of information, which will start in my mind the grandest thoughts, the noblest impulses, the brightest conceptions, the purest emotions, or which sets before me the truest ideals of manly virtue and heroic character?

But how do most persons read? On what principle do they decide what to read or what not to read? Is there one in a hundred who ever gives

a serious thought to the question or makes any intelligent choice whatever? With many it is "the last novel," utterly regardless of what it is. With others it is anything that is talked about or extensively advertised. We live in a time when the trivial is glorified and magnified and held up in the blaze of sensation, so as to attract the gaze of the multitude and sell. That is all many books are made for—to sell. They are written for money, they are set up in type, stereotyped, printed, illustrated, bound, ornamented, titled, simply for money. There is no soul in them. There was no high motive, no thought all along their history of doing good to any one, of starting a new impulse, of adding to the fund of the world's joy or comfort or knowledge. They were wrought out of mercenary brains. They were made to sell, and to sell they must appeal to the desire for sensation, excitement, romance, or diversion. So it comes to pass that the country is flooded with utterly worthless publications, whilst really good and valuable books are left unsold and unread. The multitude goes into ecstasies over ephemeral tales, weekly literary papers, new, sentimental poems, magazines, and a thousand trivial works that please or excite for a day and are then old and forgotten in the

intense and thrilling plot of the story that is newest and latest to-morrow, whilst books every way admirable are passed by unnoticed.

Hence, while everybody reads, few read the grand masters. Modern culture knows all about the auroral literature that flashes up and dies out again, but knows nothing of history or true poetry or really great fiction. Many people who have not the courage to confess ignorance of the last novel regard it as no shame to be utterly ignorant of the majestic old classics. In the floods of ephemeral literature the great books are buried away. It is pretty safe to say that not one in a hundred now reads Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and that not one in a thousand has ever read a translation of Homer's *Iliad*. Every one goes into ra tures over some sentimental song-writer of a d y, but how many read even the great masterpieces of Shakespeare? *The Pilgrim's Progress* is only known from being referred to so often, while the thousand summer volumes on sentimental religion are eagerly devoured by pious people.

It is time for a revolution on this subject. We must gain courage to remain ignorant of the great mass of books in the annual Nile-overflow of the printing-press. We must read the great masters

in poetry, in science, in history, in religion, in fiction, and we must have a system by which our reading shall be rigidly controlled and directed, or we shall spend all our life and not be profited. Aimless rambling from book to book accomplishes little. We should select conscientiously, wisely, systematically.

Having stricken from the catalogue everything that bears any immoral taint and whatever is merely ephemeral and trivial, there remains a grand residuum of truly great works, some old, some new, from which we must again select according to our individual taste, occupation, leisure, attainments and opportunities. We should read as a staple works that require close attention, thought, study and research, indulging in lighter classes only for mental relaxation. The old classic poets should be not only read, but deeply studied. Of history one should have at least a correct general knowledge. One cannot afford to be ignorant of the sciences in these days of discovery.

All books that set before us grand ideals of character are in some sense great. The ancients were wont to place the statues of their distinguished ancestors about their homes that their children might, by contemplating them, be stim-

ulated to emulate their noble qualities. Great lives embalmed in printed volumes have a wondrous power to kindle the hearts of the young, for "a good book holds, as in a vial, the purest efficacy and extraction of the living intellect that bred it." There are great books enough to occupy us during all our short and busy years; and if we are wise, we will resolutely avoid all but the richest and the best. As one has written, "We need to be reminded every day how many are the books of inimitable glory which, with all our eagerness after reading, we have never taken in our hands. It will astonish most of us to find how much of our industry is given to the books which leave no mark—how often we rake in the litter of the printing-press while a crown of gold and rubies is offered us in vain."

XXIII.

PERSONAL BEAUTY.

THE desire to be beautiful is natural and right. Holiness is beauty. The human form, when it first came from the Creator's hands, was perfect in loveliness. It was the embodiment of all that is noble, graceful, winning, impressive and charming. We cannot doubt that God made a perfect body as the temple and home of a perfect soul that bore his own image. He who made all things beautiful certainly gave the highest loveliness to his masterpiece.

But sin has marred the grace of the human form. Perfect physical beauty is not found in any one. There are fragments of the shattered splendor found—one feature in one, and another in another—by which we have hints of what the original was. The artists have tried to reproduce the first perfect beauty by gathering from many forms these fragments of loveliness and combining them

all in one, which they call the ideal human beauty. They point to certain remains of ancient Greek sculpture as presenting, as nearly as human skill can do it, the restored beauty of creation.

How far art may have succeeded in achieving its aim we know not. We cannot tell whether the Apollo Belvidere is or is not a restored Adam, or whether the Venus de Medici fairly represents the beauty of Eve. This is not our inquiry at this time. But we know that all Christian life is a growth toward perfect beauty. Christ came to restore ruined nature to its lost loveliness. This is true not only of the spiritual life, but also of the physical form. We are to wear the spotless image of our Lord in the future world. Perhaps we do not always realize the full meaning of this truth as it is declared in the Scriptures. It is explicitly and positively taught that Christ will change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto his own glorified body. This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. This is not the place for speculations as to the nature or material of the resurrection body, and it may only be said further that the plain, clear teachings of inspiration are that all blemishes and infirmities are to be left in the

grave. There will be no deformities in the new body. There will be no sin and no disease. All the work of sin is to be undone by redemption, and hence the body will be restored to its original perfectness. Thus the development of Christian life is toward perfect beauty, and the desire to be beautiful in form and feature, unless perverted, is a proper and holy desire.

What, then, is true personal beauty? Answering the question from a Christian point of view, we know that it does not consist in mere physical charms, in proportion, grace, figure, complexion, but in the life, the soul that looks out through these windows.

> "What is beauty? Not the show
> Of graceful limbs and features. No;
> These are but flowers
> That have their dated hours
> To breathe their momentary sweets, then go.
> 'Tis the stainless soul within
> That outshines the fairest skin."

It is a well-known and universally-accepted principle that the soul gives to the body its form, and that the life writes its whole history in the features of the face. A beautiful character will transfigure the countenance. You look into it, and you read refinement, purity, delicacy, peace,

love. In like manner, an evil character hangs its curtains at all the windows, and you see at a glance selfishness, cunning, lust, deceit, falsehood, malignity, coarseness, unrest. So all spiritual culture is toward beauty, for as the heart becomes filled with the holy graces of the Spirit they make themselves manifest in the transforming of the features.

It was sin that shattered the original splendor of the human form. All blemishes, disfigurements and deformities have been produced by violations of divine laws, by over-indulgence of passions and appetites, and by diseases and infirmities resulting therefrom. Hence all true searching for beauty must be along the path on which it was lost. Those who would recover and retain loveliness of form and feature must seek to have the divine laws written upon their hearts and assimilated in their lives.

The observance of the physical laws of our being is of vital importance. These are inexorable. There is no forgiveness for their violation. A large part of the misery and wretchedness of this world comes from the disregard of these precepts. The beauty as well as the comfort and happiness of men and women would be immeasurably advanced if all

could be brought to obey, strictly and invariably, the simple laws of physical life.

Then still more essential is the observance of moral and spiritual precepts. The soul informs its own dwelling. There is no beauty in the idiot's face. The most perfect features have scant loveliness when there is a vacant mind behind them. Selfishness wipes out the soft and tender lines and leaves the cheeks faded and cold. Meanness degrades the majesty of the countenance and takes the kingly glory from the eyes. Greed petrifies the features. Anger, nourished and cherished, writes itself upon the visage. Impurity of soul and life robs the expression of the bloom of innocence and hangs its telltale marks all about the face. It is utterly vain to hope to be beautiful with bad tempers, groveling tastes or base passions ruling in the heart. The face may still wreathe itself with smiles. The greatest pains may still be taken to cherish and retain the bloom and freshness of innocence. But it is in vain. A discrowned soul cannot long preserve in its palace the splendors and glories of its days of power and majesty. The inner life writes every line of its history on the features, where the practiced eye can read its every word.

So, also, beauty of soul exhibits itself in the ex-

pression. Kindness wreathes the face with gentleness. Holy thoughts refine the countenance. Grand purposes, noble resolves, high aspirations, clothe the form and features with dignity and power. Sincerity and truth transfigure even the homeliest looks.

Those who would cultivate personal beauty must look to their inner life. As the dweller's taste and refinement always manifest themselves in the adornment of his home, so goodness and moral beauty in a soul will always exhibit themselves in look and manner and bearing.

Hence there is no beautifier of the person like the Holy Ghost dwelling in a lowly heart. The plainest features are often made to shine in almost supernatural loveliness when struck through with the warmth and tenderness of indwelling love. The most beautiful people in the world are truly benevolent people, their hearts full of sympathy aud kindness and their lives devoted to labors of love for the good of the race. The sweetest faces I ever saw were those of dear old Quaker mothers. All their life through they have kept their hearts at peace. They have never resisted, never defended their rights, never struggled against circumstances. They have quietly submitted to the will of God,

and his calm and holy peace has filled their souls and ruled their lives. This blessed peace, indwelling, has made their faces almost transparent, radiant with the radiance of heaven and lovely beyond any picture on this earth. Old age writes no lines of decay and leaves no marks of wasting or fading upon them. The sweetness and freshness of youth linger through all the chill winter of years, like those tender plants and flowers that creep out in springtime from under melting snows unharmed and fragrant. An anxious and fretful disposition simply reverses all this.

Love is the fulfilling of the law—not selfish love, but the love that goes out in self-denial, in sympathy, in kindness, in continual thought and effort and sacrifice for others. Such love builds beauty for its home, just as the chaste and delicate flower by its own nature fashions for itself a form of exquisite shape and hue. "The angels are beautiful because they are good, and God is beauty because he is love." Men and women grow lovely even in outward feature just in the degree in which they become filled with the love of God.

Not, then, to the outside must our care be given, but to the culture of the heart. A beautiful soul will transform the most repulsive features. On the

other hand, a bad heart will break through natural loveliness, spoiling its delicacy and beauty. When God took from a devoted mother a precious and her only child, she, to occupy her heart and hands in some way about her vanished treasure, filled the first days with touching a faithful photograph of her child which she possessed. Love wrought very skillfully, and under her brush the very features of the sweet, coy child-life came out in the picture. The photograph was laid carefully away for a few days, and when she sought it again the eyes were dimmed and the face marred with strange and ugly blotches. Patiently she wrought it over a second time, and the beauty was restored. Again it was laid away, and again the ugly blotches appeared. The fault was in the paper on which the photograph had been taken. There were chemicals lurking in it which affected the delicate colors. The analogy holds in human lives. We may adorn the face and features as we will. By art and skill and care we may try to keep the complexion fair, the skin fresh and soft and the whole countenance beautiful; but if there are within us selfish hearts, groveling dispositions, uncontrolled appetites, they will work out through the surface-beauty, and will blotch and spoil it all.

The true culture of personal beauty is not external; it is heart-work. It is not the hot sun, the high winds, or any climatic accidents, that steal from cheeks their truest loveliness. I see ladies taking the most wonderful care to keep their complexions soft and white. They shield themselves scrupulously from wind and sun and reflection. If we were all to give as much thought and pains to keep the bloom of our heart's purity untarnished and the warmth and sweetness of our heart's life unwasted, our faces would soon shine with the lustre of angelic beauty.

There are some who can never hope to be physically beautiful in face and form in this world. Their visages are in some way marred. Accident or disease has left them disfigured. Or the sins of past generations have visited them in the shape of some physical deformity that dooms them to live in a ruined soul-house all their days. But even to such Christ brings the possibility of the rarest beauty. The deformed Christian will walk erect in beautiful womanhood or majestic manhood on the shores of immortality. The face scarred by the flames will appear in unblemished loveliness in the new home. Wrinkled age will get back all the freshness of childhood. Christ is able to take the mean-

est fragment of humanity and make it all glorious and divine. As the summer takes the barest tree from the clasp of winter, covers it with garments of green and steeps it in fragrance, so the Lord Jesus can take the most ill-formed, the barest and most unsightly character and clothe it in the garments of grace and love.

A piece of canvas is of a trifling value. You can buy it for a few pennies. You would scarcely think it worth picking up if you saw it lying in the street. But an artist takes it and draws a few lines and figures on it, and then with his brush touches in certain colors, and the canvas is sold for hundreds of dollars. So Christ takes up a ruined, worthless human life which has no beauty, no attractiveness, but is repulsive, blotched and stained by sin. Then the fingers of his love add touches of beauty, painting the divine image upon it, and it becomes precious, glorious, immortal.

XXIV.

TAKING CHEERFUL VIEWS.

ONE of the divinest secrets of a happy life is the art of extracting comfort and sweetness from every circumstance. Some one has said that the habit of looking on the bright side is worth a thousand pounds a year. It is a wand whose power exceeds that of any fabled conjurer's to change all things into blessings. Those who take cheerful views find happiness everywhere, and yet how rare is the habit! The multitude prefer to walk on the shady side of the ways of life. One writes of the "luxury of woe," and there would seem to be a meaning in the phrase, paradoxical as it appears. There are those who take to gloom as a bat to darkness or as a vulture to carrion. They would rather nurse a misery than cherish a joy. They always find the dark side of everything, if there is a dark side to be found. They appear to be conscientious grumblers, as if

it were their duty to extract some essence of misery from every circumstance. The weather is either too cold or too hot, too wet or too dry. They never find anything to their taste. Nothing escapes their criticism. They find fault with the food on the table, with the bed in which they lie, with the railroad-train or steamboat on which they travel, with the government and its officials, with merchant and workman—in a word, with the world at large and in detail. They are chronic grumblers. Instead of being content in the state in which they are, they have learned to be discontented, no matter how happy their lot. If they had been placed in Eden, they would have discovered something with which to find fault. Their wretched habit empties life of possible joy for them and turns every cup to gall.

On the other hand, there are rare spirits who always take cheerful views of life. They look at the bright side. They find some joy and beauty everywhere. If the sky is covered with clouds, they will point out to you the splendor of some great cloud-bank piled up like mountains of glory. When the storm rages, instead of fears and complaints, they find an exquisite pleasure in contemplating its grandeur and majesty. In the most

faulty picture they see some bit of beauty which charms them. In the most disagreeable person they discover some kindly trait or some bud of promise. In the most disheartening circumstances they find something for which to be thankful, some gleam of cheer breaking in through the thick gloom.

When a ray of sunlight streamed through a crack in the shutter and made a bright patch on the floor in the darkened room, the little dog rose from his dark corner and went and lay down in the one sunny spot; and these people live in the same philosophical way. If there be one beam of cheer or hope anywhere in their lot, they will find it. They have a genius for happiness. They always make the best out of circumstances. They are happy as travelers. They are contented as boarders. Their good nature never fails. They take a cheerful view of every perplexity. Even in sorrow their faces are illumined, and songs come from the chambers where they weep. Such persons have a wondrous ministry in this world. They are like apple trees when covered with blossoms, pouring sweetness all about them.

It may be worth while to linger a little on the philosophy of living which produces such results.

Some people are born with sunny dispositions, with large hopefulness and joyfulness, and with eyes for the bright side of life. Others are naturally disposed to gloom. Physical causes have, no doubt, much to do with the discontent of many lives. Dyspepsia or a disordered liver is responsible for much bad temper, low spirits and melancholy; and yet, while there is this predisposition in temperament on the one hand toward hopefulness, and on the other toward depression and gloom, it is still largely a matter of culture and habit, for which we are individually responsible. Young persons certainly can train themselves to take cheerful views of life and to extract enjoyment from any circumstances.

This is clearly a most important part of Christian culture. Joyfulness is everywhere commended as a Christian duty. Discontent is a most detestable fault. Morbidness is a sin. Fretfulness grieves God. It tells of unbelief. It destroys the soul's peace. It disfigures the beauty of Christian character. It not only makes us soured and unhappy in our own hearts, but its influence on others is bad. We have no right to project the gloom of our discontent over any other life. Our ministry is to be ever toward joy. There is nothing so de-

pressing in its effect upon others as morbidness. Hence, for the sake of those among whom we live and upon whose lives we are for ever unconsciously either casting shadows or pouring sunshine, we should seek to learn this Christian art of contentment.

What are some of the elements of this divine philosophy of living?

One is patient submission to ills and hardships which are unavoidable. No lot is perfect. No mortal ever yet found a set of circumstances without some unpleasant feature. Sometimes it is in our power to modify the discomforts. Our trouble is often of our own making. Much of it needs only a little energetic activity on our part to remove it. We are fools if we live on amid ills and hardships which a reasonable industry would change to comforts, or even pleasures.

But if there are inevitable ills or burdens which we cannot by any energy of our own remove or lighten, they must be submitted to without murmuring. We have a saying that "What cannot be cured must be endured." But the very phrasing tells of an unyielding heart. There is submission to the inevitable, but no reconciliation. True contentment does not chafe under disappointments and

losses, but accepts them, becomes reconciled to them, and at once looks about to find something good in them. This is the secret of happy living. And when we come to think of it, how senseless it is to struggle against the inevitable! Discontent helps nothing. It never removes a hardship or makes a burden any lighter or brings back a vanished pleasure. One never feels better for complaining. It only makes him wretched. One bird in a cage struggles against its fate, flies against the wire walls, and beats upon them in efforts to be free till its breast and wings are all bruised and bleeding. Another bird shut in accepts the restraint, perches itself upon its bar and sings. Surely the canary is wiser than the starling.

Then we would get far along toward contentment if we ceased to waste time dreaming over unattainable earthly good. Only a few people can be great or rich; the mass must always remain in ordinary circumstances. Suppose all our forty millions were millionaires; who could be found to do the work that must be done? Or suppose all were great poets. Imagine forty million people in one country writing poetry! Who would write the prose? A little serious reflection will show that the world needs only a very few great and conspic-

uous lives, while it needs millions for its varied industries, its plain duties, its hard toil. And yet a large amount of our discontent arises from our envy of those who have what we have not. There are many who lose all the comfort of their own lives in coveting the better things that some other one possesses.

There are several considerations that ought to modify this miserable feeling which brings so much bitterness. If we could know the secret history of the life that we envy for its splendor and prosperity, perhaps we would not exchange for it our lowlier life with its homely circumstances. Certain it is that contentment is not so apt to dwell in palaces or on thrones as in the homes of the humble. The tall peaks rise nearer the skies, but the winds smite them more fiercely.

Then why should I hide my one talent in the earth because it is not ten? Why should I make my life a failure in the place allotted to me, while I sit down and dream over unattainable things? Why should I miss my one golden opportunity, however small, while I envy some other one what seems his greater opportunity? Countless people make themselves wretched by vainly trying to grasp far-away joys, while they leave untouched

and despised the numberless little joys and bright bits of happiness which lie close to their hand. As one has written, "Stretching out his hand to catch the stars, man forgets the flowers at his feet, so beautiful, so fragrant, so multitudinous and so various." The secret of happiness lies in extracting pleasure from the things we have, while we enter no mad, vain chase after impossible fancies.

Another way to train ourselves to cheerful views of life is resolutely to refuse to be frightened at shadows, or even to see trouble where there is none. Half or more of the things that most worry us have no existence save in a disordered fancy. Many things that in the dim distance look like shapes of peril, when we draw near to them melt into harmless shadows, or even change into forms of friendliness. Much of the gloomy tinge that many people see on everything is caused by the color of the glasses through which they look. We sit behind our blue-glass windows, and then wonder what makes everything blue. The greater part of our discontent is caused by some imaginary trouble which never really comes. We can do much toward curing ourselves of fretting and worrying by refusing to be fooled by a foreboding imagination.

Then we need to learn ever to make the best of

things. There will always be cloudy days. No one can live without meeting discomforts, disappointments and hardships. No wisdom, no industry of ours can eliminate from our experience all that is disagreeable or painful. But shall we allow the one discordant note in the grand symphony to mar for us all the noble music? Shall we permit the one discomfort in our home to cast a cloud over all its pleasures and embitter all its joys? Shall we not seek for the bright side? There is really sunshine enough in the darkest day to make any ordinary mortal happy if he has eyes to see it. It is marvelous what a trifling thing will give joy to a truly grateful heart. Mungo Park in the bleak desert found the greatest delight in a single tuft of moss growing in the sand. It saved him from despair and from death and filled his soul with joy and hope. There is no lot in life so dreary that it has not at least its one little patch of beauty or its one wee flower looking up out of the dreariness, like a smile of God.

Even if the natural eye can see no brightness in the cloud, the faith of the Christian knows that there is good in everything for the child of God. There are reasons, no doubt, why no perfect happiness can be found in this world. If there were

no thorns in our pillow here, should we care to pillow our heads on the bosom of divine love? Our Father makes the nest rough to drive us to seek the warmer, softer nest prepared for us in his own love.

To each one who is truly in Christ and who really loves God there is a promise of good out of all things. There is a wondrous alchemy in the divine providence that out of the commingling of life's strange elements always produces blessing. Thus faith's vision sees good in all things, however dark they may appear, and ill in nothing. We need but living faith in God to enable us to take a cheerful view of any experience.

There is another purely Christian element in the culture of contentment which must not be overlooked. The more the heart becomes engaged with God and its affections enchained about him, the less is it disturbed by the little roughnesses and hardships of earth. Things that fret childhood have no power to break the peace of manhood. As we grow into higher spiritual manhood and become more and more filled with Christ we shall rise above the power of earth's discontents. We shall be happy even amid trials and losses, amid discomforts and disappointments, because our life

is hid with Christ in God and we have meat to eat of which the world knows not.

Thus we may train ourselves away from all gloomy and despondent habits and experiences toward cheerfulness and hope. The lesson, well learned, will repay the sorest discipline. It will bring some new pleasure into every moment. It will paint beauty for us on the dreariest desert. It will plant flowers for us along every steep and rugged road. It will bring music for us out of every sighing wind and wailing storm. It will fill the darkest night with starbeams. It will make us sunny-hearted Christians, pleasing God and blessing the world.

XXV.

SOMETHING ABOUT AMUSEMENTS.

"Why should we think youth's draught of joy,
If pure, would sparkle less?
Why should the cup the sooner cloy
Which God hath deigned to bless?"

ANY man is a cynic who condemns all amusement as evil and inconsistent with the truest Christian life. Such teaching might have been accepted in the days of ascetic sternness and rigor, when piety meant contempt for all the joys and pleasures of life, when devotees thought to merit salvation by macerating their flesh, by breaking the chords of natural affection and by spurning every happy experience as sinful. Then holiness was moroseness, self-inflicted pain was a sweet savor to God, and pleasure was guilt. There have also been phases of undoubted piety in later days in which similar abnormal developments of Christian life have appeared either as the result of devotion to some stern doctrine or produced by the sore

stress and strain of existence under which gladness died away and life became hard and colorless in its very intensity.

In many lives misconceptions of the true ideal of Christian character have tended to illiberal views regarding pleasure. The loyal and earnest Christian seeks ever to imitate Christ. Our conceptions of his character and life reproduce themselves, therefore, in our ethics and living. A sombre Christ makes a sombre religion. A joyous and joy-approving Christ produces a sunny religion.

It has been said from time immemorial that Jesus never smiled. The prevalent conception of him has been of a man clothed in deep sorrow, grief-laden, tearful, on whose face no ripple of gladness ever played. Wherever this conception has prevailed it has colored the lives of all who sought closely to follow Christ. The result has often been a gloomy religious spirit which sought to repress its natural joy. Mirth has seemed irreverent and all amusements have been regarded as incompatible with sincere piety.

But as men have read more deeply into the heart and spirit of the gospel this view of Christ has been found to be superficial. Amid all his sorrows, under all the deep shadows that hung over

his life, Christ carried ever a heart of joy. Exteriorly his life was hard and full of grief, but the hardness did not crush his spirit. He did not carry his griefs in his face. His heart was like one of those fresh-water springs that burst up in the sea, ever sweet under all the salt bitterness. Wherever he moved there were joy and gladness. Not one misanthropic word ever fell from his lips. He did not frown upon the children's plays, upon the marriage festivities, or upon the sweet pleasures of home. A benign joyfulness plays over nearly every chapter of his blessed life. The true conception of Christ's character is of a deeply serious man, earnest, thoughtful, living an intense life, but never sombre, gloomy or cynical, the deep earnestness of his character struck through with a quiet joy and the calm, steady light of a holy peace.

Wherever this conception prevails it gives its lovely color, its sunny brightness, to the lives of those who love and worship Christ. It unbinds the iron fetters of ascetic piety. It does not make men boisterous. It tames wild nature. It represses excessive levity. It makes life earnest and serious, charging it with a deep consciousness of responsibility. But it does not restrain the innocent play of nature. It does not put out the light

of joy. There is no inconsistency between holiness and laughter. It is no sin to smile. Indeed, a sombre religion is unnatural. Gloom is morbidness. Our lives should be sunny and songful. The type of religion in the New Testament is joyous even amid sorrows. There is not a tinge of ascetic severity or misanthropic hardness in one of the saints whose pictures are preserved. We hear songs in the night. There is a flower that is most fragrant when the sun has set, and in the darkness pours its richest aroma on the air. So true religion grows in sweetness as shadows deepen. He misrepresents Christianity and the likeness of the Master whose piety is cold, rigid, colorless, joyless, or who frowns upon innocent gladness and pure pleasure.

True Christlike piety does not, therefore, condemn all amusements. It does not look with disapproval upon the sports of the children or call youth's glad-heartedness sinful. There are proper amusements in which the truest Christian may indulge without grieving Christ, even enjoying his gracious benediction and conscious of his presence. It is not my intention to designate specifically what amusements are proper for a Christian, or to do more than lay down certain general principles

relating to the subject. This is all that the Scriptures do, leaving the responsibility of discrimination upon the individual conscience.

The necessity for amusement and recreation is written in our nature. No man or woman can endure the incessant strain of hard and intense life, day after day, month after month, without some relaxation. God ordained sleep, the Sabbath and home as quiet resting-places in which we may pause and build up what toil and care and struggle have torn down. And we need, not rest only, but pleasure also, to unbind for a little the stiff harness of duty, to relax the strain of responsibility and to lubricate the joints of life. All work and no play makes older people, as well as Jack, dull. One that reads Luther's private and home life, and sees how he could laugh and how he played with his children even when carrying the greatest burdens, learns where he found much of the inspiration for his gigantic toils and stern and herculean tasks.

It is necessary for all earnest and busy people to have seasons of relaxation and diversion. But to what extent may we indulge? Life has its duties and responsibilities, and these we must never neglect. If we must give account for every idle word we speak, must we not also for every idle

moment, and for every moment wasted in pleasure? How far, then, are we at liberty to spend time in amusement or relaxation? Clearly, only so far as it is needed to give us required rest and to fit us for the most efficient work. It is right to sleep; but when we give more time to sleep than is necessary to restore tired Nature, to "knit up the raveled sleeve of care," and to fit us for duty, we become squanderers of precious time. The same principle must be applied to time spent in any kind of relaxing pleasure however innocent. Life is not play. It is very serious. It has its responsibilities and duties, which press at every point and fill every day and hour. He who would succeed in the exciting life of to-day cannot afford to lose a moment. Every hour must be made to count. And he who would fill up the measure of responsibility implied in consecration to God must redeem the time. Amusements are lawful, therefore, only so far as they are necessary to reinvigorate life's wasted energies, or to put fresh buoyancy and elasticity into powers wearied or worn by the strain of physical or mental toil.

Amusement is not an end, but a means. It is not life's object, but a help on the way. It is not the goal, but the cool bower or the bubbling spring

on the stiff, steep mountain-side. This distinction is vital, and must not be overlooked by those who would so live as to please God.

Then, as to the kind of amusements in which we may lawfully engage, there are several equally clear principles to be observed. At the very outset, whatever is in itself sinful carries its own condemnation on its face. A Christian is never to indulge in sin. No necessity of relaxation can ever give license to anything that contravenes the pure morals of the gospel. A Christian is never off duty, is never anything but a Christian. No combination of circumstances can make him blameless in violating the principles and precepts of Christianity. These are just as binding on Tuesday or Thursday evening as on the Sabbath. Amusements, as well as books, speech, business and all conduct, must be brought to the bar of the highest Christian morality.

Religion and common life are not two different and distinct things. We may not cut our existence in two parts and say, "Over this Christ shall rule, but over that he shall have no control." True religion knows no difference between Sabbath and Monday, so far as the ethics of life are concerned. Each day brings its own specific duties, but there are not moral precepts for the one which are sus-

pended when its sun sets that for six days a mitigated or less holy law may prevail. Holiness is to be the Christian's dress all the week through in every hour's conduct. All pleasures and amusements must be tested by the unvarying rule of right. The standard of perfect purity cannot be lowered.

It is the fashion to laugh at criticisms upon art and certain forms of amusement, made on moral grounds. But for a Christian there is nothing which must not be tested by the severest rules of purity. All immodest exhibitions, all improprieties of attitude which would in ordinary associations be condemned, all forms of pleasure in which lurks even the suggestion of impurity, must by this principle be excluded from the class of amusements proper for one who would closely follow Christ.

A further test which seems just and reasonable is a reference to the spirit of Christ's own life. This is to be the Christian's guidance in all things. His earthly life is the copy set for us. It is a safe and true thing to test every separate act and to ascertain our duty in every uncertain moment by asking what Christ would do if he were in our place. All life is following him. Where he will not lead us we cannot follow. As we have seen, he

does not frown upon pure and innocent pleasures. He went himself, when he was on the earth, to places of enjoyment and festivity. He attended a marriage-feast and contributed to the gladness of the guests. He accepted invitations to family feasts. There is not a trace of asceticism in all the story of his life. And he would do the same if he were here now. Pleasures that are pure, innocent and helpful, or that contribute to the joy and good of others, he would enjoy. And what he would do if he were in our place, we, as his followers, may do. But there are amusements in which we may be sure he would not indulge. A tender spiritual instinct will readily discriminate between those in which he would and those in which he would not engage. This seems a reasonable and legitimate test for us, his followers.

Then there is another test. The one great business of life is character-building. The aspiration of every earnest Christian is to grow every day in holiness and spirituality. This motive is to rule all life. Our business, our associations, our friendships, are to be chosen with reference to this one object. Anything that tarnishes the lustre of our spirituality, or hinders the development of our Christian graces, or breaks the inner peace of our

hearts, or interferes with our communion with God, is harmful and must be excluded from among the circumstances of our lives.

The question as to what amusements are proper or what improper for us, each one must answer for himself. Questions continually asked of pastors and recognized Christian guides are such as these: "Is it right for a Christian to dance? Or may he attend the theatre or opera or circus, or play cards?" The true way to answer such questions is by an honest appeal to experience. What is the influence of such amusements on our spiritual life and enjoyment? Is prayer as sweet, as welcome, as helpful, afterward? Do we return to it from the hours passed in such pleasures with the same eagerness, the same desire, as before? Do we find our communion with God as sweet, as restful, as conscious? Do we retain the warmth and glow of heart that we felt before? Or do our amusements mar our peace and interrupt our enjoyment of the divine presence? Do they unfit us for devotion, and do we find our hearts made cold and distracted by them? Do they chill our ardor in Christian work? At what times in our life do we care most for such pleasures? Is it when our religious life is at its best, when love is most fer-

vent and zeal most earnest? Does the young Christian, in the warmth and glow of his first love, care for these things? Do they, in our experience, promote our spirituality and fit us for higher usefulness?

This is the experimental test. All the circumstances about us are educating influences, and whatever is injurious to piety, whatever lowers character, is not proper or right as a means of enjoyment.

True and rational amusements are a great force in educating and building character. All pure joy is helpful. All pure art leaves its touch of beauty. Pure music sings itself into our hearts, and becomes thenceforward and for ever a new element of power in our life. Laughter makes life sunnier. It sweeps the clouds from the sky, shakes off many a care, smooths out many a wrinkle and dries many a tear. Pure pleasure sweetens many a bitter heart-fountain, drives away many a gloomy thought and many a hobgoblin shape of imagined terror, and saves many a darkened spirit from despair. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Not the least highly-gifted men are those to whom God has imparted the talent of humor that they may make others laugh.

Sanctified wit has a blessed mission. Life is so hard, so stern, with so many burdens and struggles, that there is need for all the bright words we can speak. The most wretched people in the world are those who go about in sackcloth, carrying all their griefs in their faces and casting shadows everywhere. Every Christian should be a happiness-maker. We need a thousand times more joy in our lives than most of us get. We would be better men and women if we were happier. Like "the man who hath no music in his soul," he who has no sense of gladness and gives forth no pleasure is "fit for treason, stratagems and spoils," and is not worthy to be trusted.

We need, most of us, to plan more pleasures, especially more home pleasures. Busy men need them, weary, worried women need them, glad-hearted children need them. There are amusements and relaxations which do not tarnish the soul's purity or chill the ardor of devotion or break our fellowship with heaven, but which refine, exalt, purify, enlarge and enrich life.

Much harm has been done in the past by the indiscriminate condemnation of amusements, while nothing has been provided to take the place of those which are harmful. The absolute necessity

of relaxation of some kind must be kept in mind. God has made us needing mirth. Amusement men will have; and in this, as in all other reforms, the truest and wisest method is not to condemn and cut off, leaving nothing, but to provide true pleasures and substitute them, and let these win hearts from the impure and the hurtful.

It was a maxim of Napoleon's, "To replace is to conquer." Let Christian parents and Christian people in a community provide healthful and profitable entertainments for the young, and these will gradually and insensibly uproot and replace those which are pernicious and injurious. There is no other true and effective way. This is as much the duty of Christian leaders as to preach sermons and conduct Sabbath-schools. Otherwise, while one day's religious services bring help and purity to the lives of the people and the children, six days' worldly pleasures will more than undo all the good. Let Christian men and women quietly institute in every community such means of enjoyment as shall combine pleasure and profit, and thus the harmful shall be replaced.

XXVI.

ON THE CHOICE OF FRIENDS.

FEW objects are of such vital importance to young people as the character of their early friends. Tourists among the Alps climb the mountains tied together with ropes that they may help each other. But sometimes one falls and drags the others down with him. So the friends to whom the young attach themselves will either help them upward to fairer beauty and sublimer excellence or drag them down to blemished character, and mayhap to sullied purity.

A friend should be one whom we can trust perfectly. It is the truest test of friendship that you can utter the most inviolable confidences, living as it were a transparent life in the presence of your friend without dreading for a moment that he will betray or misuse the privacies you have unveiled to him. Such confidence is impossible without a background of integrity and sterling character.

If you have the least doubt of a man's truth and honor, if you believe him capable of being disloyal even in thought, you cannot take him into the sacred relation of friendship. The familiar story of Alexander and his physician well illustrates the trust that friendship should be able to give. The king was sick, and received a note telling him that his physician intended to give him poison under the guise of medicine. He read the note and put it under his pillow, and when the physician came in he took the proffered cup, and, looking him calmly in the face, drank the draught. He then drew out the note and gave it to his friend. It is impossible to conceive of any trust more perfect than this. Such confidence could never be exercised in one of whose integrity we could have the faintest suspicion. The first essential qualification in a friend is, therefore, a soul of unblemished truth.

Then a friend must be one who will not weary of us when he discovers the faults and imperfections that are in us. We meet people in society, and they see us in the glow of distance which lends enchantment, concealing our unlovely qualities or spreading over them a deceptive coloring. Some faces which look very attractive when veiled dis-

close many blemishes when seen uncovered. There are few characters that do not reveal uncomely traits on intimate acquaintance that were not apparent in the ordinary intercourse of social life. We walk before our closest friends in a sort of moral *deshabille*, and they oftentimes see much silliness, pride and vanity under the thin veneer of our society manners. Even in the very best of us there are unlovely features which close intimacy discloses. In choosing friends we want those who will not be driven away when they learn our faults. True friendship must be proof against all such discoveries. It must take us for better or for worse. We do not want friends in whose presence we must wear a mask of reserve, but those who, seeing and knowing us as we are, shall love us in spite of the blemishes, seeking wisely, though not officiously or offensively, the removal of our faults and the elevation of our character. Nothing but great-heartedness is sufficient for this essential want.

Then we should choose friends who will be helpful to us. Every friendship leaves its impression upon us. There are touches that blight, and there are touches that are benedictions. A young and innocent heart is so delicate in its beauty that a breath of evil leaves it sullied. We cannot afford

to take into our life, even for a little time, an impure companionship. It will leave a memory that will give pain even in the holiest after years.

There is embraced in the thought of friendship the element of mutual helpfulness. There grows up between two friends a sort of holy communism. What one has the other must share, whether it be sorrow or joy. Whatever experience is passing over the chords of one heart is echoed also from the other. When there is a cup of gladness, two hearts drink of it. When there is a burden, there are two shoulders under it. Friendship knows no limit in giving. Its joy is not in receiving, but in imparting. It is not, therefore, exacting in its demands or quick to complain of seeming neglect. We want unselfish friends who shall care for us for our own sake. We want those who will never tire of bearing our burdens. We may have sorrow and adversity. We may become a great care in the future, unable to give anything in return save grateful love. He who becomes our friend takes upon himself many possibilities of sacrifice and unselfish service. It may cost him much. He must be one who will not grow weary of these burdens should they be imposed. He must be ready to share our infirmities and not tire of helping us.

There are friendships that do this. Holiest of them all is the parent's. I have seen a child growing up deformed or blind or deaf, or mayhap weak-minded, so as to be always a burden and a care, never a pride or a joy. And yet through the years the parental hearts clung to it with most tender affection, never wearying of the burden, ministering with almost divine patience and gentleness all the while. Then I have seen invalids who could never be anything but invalids, to be toiled for and to be watched over year after year, to be carried from room to room and up and down stairs like helpless infants. There was not a shadow of a hope that they could ever repay the toil they cost, or even lighten the burden they exacted from those who loved them. Even outside of home and family ties I have seen friendships that never faltered under burdens that were heavy and could never grow less. We know not what may befall us in the undisclosed years, and we want friends who will never tire of us should even the worst come. We want friends in prosperity and wealth who will cleave to us even more loyally if misfortune and poverty should strip us bare. Such friends are rare. Only purest unselfishness is equal to such tests.

Then, in choosing friends, we should take those only with whom we can hope to walk beyond death. Why should we form close and tender attachments here to be severed for ever at death? Why should we be unequally yoked with unbelievers? Friendship reaches its highest, truest meaning only when it knits two lives together at every point—not in the lower nature alone, but in the higher as well, and with reference to the eternal future. We should seek for our close friends, therefore, only those who are God's children. Then the web which we weave in our love-years shall never be rent or torn.

Having chosen a few such friends, we should never let them go out of our lives if we can by any possibility retain them. Friendship is too rare and sacred a treasure lightly to be thrown away. And yet many people are not careful to retain their friends. Some lose them through inattention, failing to maintain those little amenities, courtesies and kindnesses which cost so little, and yet are hooks of steel to grapple and hold our friends. Some drop old friends for new ones. Some take offence easily at imagined slights or neglects, and ruthlessly cut the most sacred ties. Some become impatient of little faults, and discard even truest friendships.

Some are incapable of any deep or permanent affection, and fly from friendship to friendship like restless birds from bough to bough, making a nest for their hearts in none. Then beautiful friendships are often destroyed, not by any sharp, sudden quarrel, but by slowly and imperceptibly drifting apart until there is a great chasm between two lives that once were woven sacredly together.

There are a great many ways of losing friends. But when we have once taken true souls into the grasp of our hearts, we should cherish them as rarest jewels. There is no wealth in the world like a noble friendship, and nothing should induce us to sacrifice such a treasure. If slights are given, let them be overlooked. If misunderstandings arise, let them quickly be set right. Let not pride or fiery temper or cold selfishness disdainfully toss away a friendship for any trivial cause. It is not hard to lose a friend, but the loss is utterly irreparable.

Let it never be overlooked that we as friends must stand ready to be and to do all that we expect our friends to be and to do. If we set a high standard for them, that standard must be ours also. It will not do to give pebbles and ask diamonds in return.

XXVII.

THE ETHICS OF HOME-DECORATION.

"Each man's chimney is his golden milestone,
Is the central point from which he measures
Every distance
Through the gateways of the world around him;
In his farthest wanderings still he sees it,
Hears the talking flame, the answering night-wind,
As he heard them
When he sat with those who were, but are not."

LONGFELLOW.

THIS is not an essay on household taste or on the art principles which relate to the adornment of homes, but there is an ethical side to this subject on which I have a suggestion or two to offer.

It is trite to say that every home influence works itself into the heart of childhood, and then works itself out again in the subsequent development of the character. None of us know how much our homes have to do with our lives. When one's childhood home has been true and tender its mem-

ories can never be effaced. Its voices of love and prayer and song come back like angels' whispers, like melodies from some far-away island in the sea, when the lips that first breathed them have long been silent in the grave. No one can ever get away from the influence of his early home. Good or bad, it clings through life. Homes are the real schools and universities in which men and women are trained, and fathers and mothers are the real teachers and makers of life. The poet's song is but the sweetness of a mother's love flowing out in rhythmic measure through her child's life. The lovely things men build in their days of strength are but the reproductions of the lovely thoughts that were whispered in their hearts in the days of tender youth. The artist's picture is but a touch of a mother's beauty wrought out on the canvas. A grand manhood or womanhood is only the home teachings and prayers woven into life and form.

It is proven that even the natural scenery in which a child is reared has much to do with the tone and hue of its future character. Those who are cradled among the grand mountains or by the shore of the majestic sea carry into their mature years the mystic influence of those scenes; and there is

no feature of a home itself or of its scenery and surroundings that does not print itself on infancy's sensitive heart like the images on the photographer's prepared plate, to be brought out again in the future character.

This truth is not properly appreciated. The educating effect of home-decoration has not received that attention which it deserves, nor has its moral value come into general and thoughtful consideration. The subject has been discussed from the view-point of art, but not from that of character culture. Much has been said and written of books, good and bad, vulgar and refining, and of the importance of putting such only as are pure and elevating into the hands of the young. In like manner, the importance of their early companionship has received much attention. But the moral effect of home adornment needs to be considered just as thoughtfully and carefully as that of either books or associations.

It is important that in the education and training of children we throw around their sensitive lives all of beauty, purity and inspiration that we can. The sites of our homes should be selected with reference to this. In this regard the country has usually wonderful advantages over the city.

Its lovely natural scenery is a gallery hung with the rarest beauties, and yet there are many builders of homes who seem never to give a thought to this. They choose sites for some temporary convenience or on the ground of inexpensiveness in the midst of unlovely, or even repulsive, surroundings, when at a little additional cost they could have placed their homes in the midst of picturesque scenery and refining surroundings. Apart altogether from the question of taste, the moral influence of the scenery on which the doors and windows open is of immeasurably more value than any difference in money cost. There is no refining and purifying power like that of true beauty.

Then the ornamentation of the grounds about a home furnishes another opportunity not only for the display of taste, but for the choice of important educating influences. These may be permitted to remain without any adornment whatever, open to passing hoof, trodden down, void of any trace of beauty. Former improvements may be suffered to fall into decay, leaving broken gates, tottering fences, unpainted buildings, grounds overgrown with weeds, with not a lovely walk or an inch of green grass, and not a tree or shrub, not a vine or flower. Or they may be made tasteful and beau-

tiful, with neatly-painted palings, gates in order, bright green lawn, shade-trees, pleasant walks, lovely plants and beds of flowers. In the mere education of taste the influence of these different surroundings is obvious, but there is a moral effect that is vastly more important. Holiness and beauty lie very close together, and the influence of all repulsiveness is toward evil.

The moral effect of interior home-decoration is still greater. We should make the rooms in which our children sleep and play and live just as bright and lovely as our means, directed by wisest skill and purest taste, can make them; and not only should the adornments and decorations be pleasing to the eye, but it is of importance that we give the most careful heed to their moral character. There are many pictures found in even christian homes whose influence is toward impurity. There are other pictures whose influence is toward gloom, and there are those again whose chaste beauty, bright cheerfulness and rich suggestiveness make them continual inspirations toward refinement and moral excellence. They frame themselves into young hearts and become a joy and comfort for ever.

A young artist once asked a great painter for

some word of advice which might help him in all his after-life. Having noticed on the walls of the young man's rooms some rough and coarse sketches, he advised him, as a young man desirous of rising in his profession, to remove these, and never to allow his eye to become familiar with any but the highest forms of art. If he could not afford to buy good oil paintings of the first class, he should either get good engravings of great pictures or have nothing at all upon his walls. If he permitted himself to become familiar with anything in art that was vulgar in conception, however perfect in execution, his taste would insensibly become depraved; whereas, if he would habituate his eye to look only on that which was pure and grand or refined and lovely, his taste would insensibly become elevated.

This advice is of perfectly pertinent application to the use of pictures and statuary in home-decoration. Children from their earliest years are naturally fond of pictures. Their eyes rest much upon them, and insensibly they have much to do not only with the formation of their taste, but also in giving moral tone and color to their minds. Familiarity with vulgarity and coarseness will inevitably deprave, and looking upon pure and

beautiful things will imperceptibly, yet surely, refine, elevate and inspire.

Lovely pictures in a home have a wondrous and subtle power in the education and refining of child-life. They may be but wood-cuts or chromos or steel engravings, but let them be chaste and pure. Let us hang nothing in our parlors or play-rooms or bedchambers or dining-rooms that would bring a blush to the sweetest modesty or start a suggestion of anything indelicate in any beholder's mind. Every picture, engraving or print will touch itself into the soul of each child reared in the home. That which is impure or gross will leave a stain, and that which is refined and lovely will become a sweetening memory for ever.

The whole question of what is modest and pure in art is one that few Christian moralists have had the courage to meet. It is the custom to characterize as "prudish" any criticism based upon ethical grounds, or any judgment of a picture or a statue which considers its moral influence. But as Christians we are bound to look at everything from a moral point of view. A painting may rank very high as a work of art, both in conception and execution, and yet its influence be toward impurity. If this is the case, it is not fit to hang on the wall

of any home. In the adornment of our homes, so far as works of art are concerned, Christian people cannot properly overlook this principle.

The display of undraped figures on canvas must necessarily exert a harmful influence, especially upon the minds of the young. The religion of Christ is chaste, and condemns everything in which lurks even the faintest suggestion of impurity. Whatever, then, may be the merits of pictures or statuary as works of art, true Christian refinement must fix its standard along the line of perfect purity. The same principles that we apply to books, to speech and to behavior we must apply unflinchingly to the selection of pictures for the walls of our homes.

I know that this principle is denied. Men tell us that it is only a prurient imagination that sees impurity on canvas or in marble. They call it prudery and quote the motto, "Evil to him who evil thinks," or the Scripture aphorism, "Unto the pure all things are pure." They taunt us, too, with ignorance of high and true art, and begin to chatter learnedly about nature. The ability to be shocked, they say, by any representation of simple nature is an evidence of an evil imagination. Such things have been said so often, and modesty has

been so much laughed at, that pure and delicate-souled people do not dare to seem to be shocked; they think they ought to be able to look at anything in art. The figures introduced in parlors and drawing-rooms wax more and more wanton as the petrified impurity of ancient heathenism is dug up and brought to fill the niches of a pure and chaste Christianity. How will this affect the purity of our households?

Ignoring utterly the charge of prurience and over-delicacy, pleading for the utmost purity in the influence of the homes in which our children are growing up, I must reassert the principle that nothing which would be indecent in actual life can be proper in art. No sophistry can make anything else out of the laws of perfect purity which religion inculcates. The least indelicacy or wantonness in any picture or statue in a home cannot but exert a subtle influence for evil over the minds and hearts of the children. We admit this principle in reference to all other things. We believe that every shadow and every beauty of the mother's character prints its image on the child's soul—that the songs sung over the cradle hide themselves away in the nooks and crannies of the tender life, to sing themselves out again in the long years to come.

We believe the same of every other influence, and must we not of pictures and statuary as well?

A godly man said that when quite young an evil picture was shown to him on the street. He saw it only once and for a moment, but he had never been able to forget it, and it had left a trail of stain all along his years.

I plead for most earnest consideration of this whole question of the morals of home-decoration. A dew-drop on a leaf in the morning mirrors the whole sky above it, whether it be blue and clear or whether it be covered with clouds. In like manner the life of a child mirrors and absorbs into itself whatever overhangs it in the home—beauty and purity or blemish and stain.

XXVIII.

PICTURES IN THE HEART.

NIEBUHR, the distinguished traveler, became blind in his old age. But, having traversed many lands, amid the fairest and loveliest scenes of the world, he had stored away in his memory countless pictures of landscapes, mountain-scenery, vales of rare beauty and great and splendid cities. Then, as he lay upon his bed or reposed on his easy-chair, his face would often brighten into a rich glow, as if some inner light was shining through. He was pondering once more some splendid scene he had looked upon in the sunny Orient. The chamber-walls of his memory were hung all over with pictures which filled his darkened years with joy and beauty. It mattered not to him that the light had gone out, leaving thick gloom all about him. His heart was his world, and there was no darkness there. No putting out of sun or star could obscure the pictures that hung in that sacred house of his soul.

In a far truer sense than many of us are aware do our hearts make our world for us. The things we behold are but the shadows of the things that are in us. If we have bright pictures in our heart, the whole world, wherever we go, will be a picture-gallery. Every scene will be a panorama of beauty. The most repulsive objects will wear a tinge of loveliness. On the other hand, a sombre, cheerless heart clothes the whole world in shadow and gloom.

A writer says: "A cold firebrand and a burning lamp started out one day to see what they could find. The firebrand came back and wrote in its journal that the whole world was very dark. It did not find a place wherever it went in which there was light. Everywhere was darkness. The lamp when it came back wrote in its journal: 'Wherever I went it was light. I did not find any darkness in all my journey.' The whole world was light. The lamp carried light with it, and when it went abroad it illuminated everything. The dead firebrand carried no light, and it found none where it went." Living men and women go through the world, and, returning, write records of observation just as diverse as these. Some find only gloom in the fairest paths, and amid the love-

liest scenes nothing beautiful. Others find nothing but beauty and brightness even in the deepest vales of earth. Each one finds just what he takes out in himself. The colors he sees are the tints of his own inner life.

Many people move amid unbroken music, hearing not one note; so, in a spiritual world full of heavenly presences, men remain unconscious of the love and companionship that linger about them. Having eyes they see not, and having ears they hear not. Their sorrows go uncomforted, while the Comforter stands close beside them. The world seems dreary and cold, while tender warmth and rich beauty lie close around them.

This is true in our commonest life. How many of us find all the good there is in our lot! Do we extract the honey from every flower that blooms in our path? Do we find all the gold that lies in the hard rocks over which our feet stumble? Do we behold all the beauty that glows along the ways of our sore toil? Do not many good things pass through our hands and slip away from us for ever before we even recognize their loveliness or their worth? Do not angels come to us unaware in homely disguise, walk with us, talk with us, minister to us, and then only become known to us

when their place is empty and they have spread their radiant wings in flight which we have no power ever to recall?

The baby seemed very troublesome as it broke your night's rest with its cries and you were compelled to rise and care for it. But when it lay hushed and still for ever among the flowers, what would you not have given to have heard it cry again? We never see the beauty of our friends till they are vanishing out of our sight. While they were with us we were impatient of their faults. Their habits fretted us. But when death touched them it clothed them in a garb of brilliant beauty. They appeared transfigured. Out of the dull, faulty character sprang a radiant angel-form, and hovered just beyond our reach for ever. What joy and blessing it had brought to our lives to have seen the beauty and the worth before the evanishing!

So it is in all life. It really takes but very little to make any one happy, yet there are many who cannot extract even a reasonable happiness from a world of luxuries and joys. There are some who see nothing to admire in the most magnificent collections of rare works of art, while others stand enraptured before the rudest picture.

There are those who will go through a forest on a June morning when a thousand birds are warbling and hear not one note of song, while others are thrilled and charmed by the coarsest bird-note that falls out of the air. One man sees no beauty in the most picturesque landscape; another finds some tender bit of loveliness in the barest and most rugged scenery. One cannot find pleasure or contentment amid the most lavish abundance; another finds enough in the sheerest poverty to give deep happiness and evoke hearty praise.

In nothing does this distinction come out more clearly than in the way the ills of life appear. One class of persons see nothing but ills. Everything wears to them a sombre aspect. Smallest trials are magnified into crushing disasters. All troubles look exaggerated to their vision.

> "We overstate the ills of life, and take
> Imagination (given us to bring down
> The choirs of singing angels overshone
> By God's clear glory) down on earth to rake
> The dismal snows instead, flake following flake,
> To cover all the corn. We walk upon
> The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
> And pant like climbers."

These see nothing but adversity in all their days. They find some cause for discontent in the serenest circumstances.

Then others find only blessing wherever they go. Their sorrows are struck through with the glory of God's love. In the baptistery at Pisa the dome is so constructed that sounds uttered below come back in a delightful response of melodious music, and even a discord is converted into a harmony as it floats up into the resonant vault and returns to the ear. Such a dome hangs over these souls. Even the painful and discordant things are changed into rich harmonies.

Life seems different to different people because their hearts differ. One man listens to thrilling music and is not moved; under the same strains another feels his soul kindled into rapture. The first has no music in his own bosom to interpret the melody that strikes his ear from without; the other has a singing angel in his breast that responds to every sweet note that breathes through the air about him. "You must have the bird in your heart," says some one, "before you can find it in the bush."

It is not, then, half so much the outward in life that we need to have changed as the spirit of the inner life. The cause of discontent is not in men's circumstances, but in their own spirit and temper. Get the song into your heart, and you

will hear songs all about you. Even the wailing storm will but make music for you. Get the beauty and the good into your own soul, and you will see only beauty and good in all things. Get the peace deep into your own life, and you will find peace in every lot.

Our hearts make our world for us. The things we see around us are but the shadows of our inner experiences, which are cast outside. The things we hear are but the echoes of our own inner thoughts and feelings. Pictures in the heart fill all the world with ugliness or loveliness.

XXIX.

LOSSES.

THERE is no other loss, in all the range of possible losses, that is so great as the breaking of our communion with God. I know that this is not the ordinary estimate. We speak with heavy hearts of our earthly sorrows. When bereavements come and our homes are emptied and our tender joys are borne away, we think there is no grief like ours. Our lives are darkened, and very dreary does this earth appear to us as we walk its paths in loneliness. The shadow that hangs about us darkens all the world.

There are other losses—losses of friends by alienation or misunderstanding; losses of property, of comforts, of health, of reputation; the shattering of beautiful and brilliant hopes, but there is not one of these that is such a calamity as the loss of God's smile or the interruption of fellowship with him.

Men sigh over those misfortunes which touch

only their earthly circumstances, but forget that the worst of all misfortunes is the decay of spirituality in their hearts. It would be well if all of us understood this. There are earthly misfortunes under which hearts remain all the while warm and tender, like the flower-roots beneath the winter's snows, ready to burst into glorious bloom when the glad springtime comes. Then there are worldly prosperities under which spiritual life withers and dies. Adversity is ofttimes the richest of blessings. But the loss of God's smile is always the sorest of calamities.

We do not know what God is to us until we lose the sense of his presence and the consciousness of his love.

This is true, indeed, of all blessings. We do not know their value to us until they are imperiled or lost. We do not prize health till it is shattered and we begin to realize that we can never have it restored again. We do not recognize the richness of youth until it has fled, with all its glorious opportunities, and worlds cannot buy it back. We do not appreciate the comforts and blessings of Providence till we have been deprived of them and are driven out of warm homes into the cold paths of a dreary world. We do not

estimate the value of our facilities for education and improvement till the period of these opportunities is gone and we must enter the battle of life imperfectly equipped. We do not know how much our friends are to us till they lie before us silent and cold. Ofttimes the empty place or the deep loneliness about us is the first revealer of the worth of one we failed duly to prize while by our side.

In like manner, we do not know the blessedness of fellowship with God until his face is darkened or he seems to have withdrawn himself. Jesus was never so precious to the disciples as when they had him no more. Two of his friends, indeed, never openly confessed their love for him until his body hung on the cross. They had secretly loved him all along, but now, as they saw that he was dead and that they could never, as they supposed, do anything more for him or enjoy his presence again, all their heart's silent love awoke in them, and they came boldly out and begged his body, gently took it down in the sight of the multitude, and bore it to loving burial. But for his death they would never have realized how much they loved him or how much he was to them.

In like manner, David never knew what God and God's house were to his soul until he was driven away from his home and could no more enter the sanctuary. As he fled away it seemed as if his very heart would break; yet his deepest sorrow was not for the joys of home left behind—for throne, crown, palace and honors—but for the house of God, with its hallowed and blessed communion. All the other bitter griefs and sorrows of the hour were swallowed up in this greatest of all his griefs—separation from the divine presence. Nor do I believe that the privileges of divine fellowship had ever been so precious to him before while he enjoyed them without hindrance or interruption as now when he looked from his exile toward the holy place and could not return to it.

Does not the very commonness of our religious blessings conceal from us their inestimable value? Luther somewhere says, "If, in his gifts and benefits, God were more sparing and close-handed, we should learn to be more thankful." The very unbroken continuity of God's favors causes us to lose sight of the Giver, and to forget to prize the gifts themselves. If there were gaps somewhere, we should learn to appreciate the outflow of the divine goodness. Who is there among us all that values

highly enough the tender summer of God's love that broods over us with infinite warmth evermore? Our church privileges, our open Bibles, our religious liberty, our Sabbath teachings and communings, our hours of prayer,—do we prize these blessings as we would if we were suddenly torn away from them by some cruel fortune and cast in a land where all these are wanting? Do we appreciate our privileges of fellowship with God as we would if for an hour his love should be withdrawn and the light of his presence put out?

There is something very sad in the thought that we not only fail to value the rich blessings of God's love, but that we ofttimes thrust them from us and refuse to take them, thereby both wounding the divine heart and impoverishing our own souls. It would be a very bitter thing if any of us should first be made truly aware of the presence and grace of Christ by his vanishing for ever from our sight, after having for long years stood with wondrous patience at our locked and bolted doors. It would be a bitter thing to learn the blessedness of the things of the mercy and love of God as we are often only made aware of the value of earthly blessings—by seeing them depart for ever beyond our reach.

There is another phase of this subject which ought to bring unspeakable comfort to God's children who are called to suffer earthly losses. If they have God left to them, no other loss is irreparable. A gentleman came home one evening with a heavy heart, and said that he had lost everything. Bankruptcy had overtaken him. "We are utterly beggared," he said. "All is gone; there is nothing left. We must go out of our home beggars for to-morrow's bread." His little girl of five years crept up on his knee, and, looking earnestly into his despairing face, said, "Why, papa, you have mamma and me left."

Yes, what is the loss of money, stores, houses, costly furniture, musical instruments and works of art while love remains? Or what are temporal and worldly losses of the sorest kind while God remains? There is surely enough in him to compensate a thousand times for every earthly deprivation. Our lives may be stripped bare—home, friends, riches, comforts, gone, every sweet voice of love, every note of joy silenced—and we may be driven out from brightness, music, tenderness and shelter into the cold ways of sorrow; yet if we have God himself left, ought it not to suffice? Is he not able to restore again to us all we have

lost? Is he not in himself infinitely more than all his gifts? If we have him, can we need anything else? In very beautiful words has Mrs. Browning expressed this truth:

"All are not taken; there are left behind
Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a happy thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind.
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comforting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring,
Where 'Dust to dust' the love from life disjoined,
And if, before those sepulchres unmoving,
I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moor in weary dearth),
Crying, 'Where are ye, O my loved and loving?'—
I know a Voice would sound: 'Daughter, I AM!
Can I suffice for heaven, and not for earth?'"

Therefore is it that so often we do not learn the depth and riches of God's love and the sweetness of his presence till other joys vanish out of our hands and other loved presences fade away out of sight. The loss of temporal things seems ofttimes to be necessary to empty our hearts that they may receive the things that are unseen and eternal. Into many a life God is never permitted to enter until sorest earthly losses have made room for him. The door is never opened to him until the soul's dead joys are borne out; then, while it stands open,

he enters bearing into it joys immortal. How often is it true that the sweeping away of our earthly hopes reveals the glory of our heart's refuge in God!

Some one has beautifully said, "Our refuges are like the nests of birds: in summer they are hidden among the green leaves, but in winter they are seen among the naked branches." Worldly losses but strip off the foliage and disclose to us our heart's warm nest in the bosom of God.

XXX.

THE SERVICE OF CONSECRATION.

ABOU BEN ADHEM awoke one night from a dream of peace—so runs the Eastern story—and saw within the moonlight in his room, making it rich, and like a lily in bloom, an angel writing in a book of gold. He asked, "What writest thou?" The angel answered, "The names of those who love the Lord." "Is mine there?" he asked. "Nay," replied the angel. Then Abou softly and cheerily said, "I pray thee, then, write me as one that loves his fellow-men." Next night the vision came again, disclosing the names whom love of God had blessed, and, lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

The more deeply we read into the life and teachings of our Lord and his apostles, the more clearly does it appear that the golden thought of this old legend comes out of the very heart of the gospel. It lies embedded not only in John's Epistles, but in the teachings of the Master himself. Love for

God is only a vaporous sentiment, a misty emotion, unless it manifest itself in love for men.

Our Lord gave us a picture of the last judgment which at first almost startles us; for, instead of making faith in himself or love for God the test of men's lives, he makes all turn, in that great final day, upon the way they have treated others in this world. Those who have used their gifts to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to relieve the distress of the poor, the prisoner, the sick, are welcomed into eternal joy. Those who have shut up their hands and hearts, allowing human need and suffering to go unrelieved, are themselves shut away from blessedness.

Are men, then, after all, saved by good works? No; the meaning of the picture lies deeper than that. True love for Christ always opens men's hearts toward their fellows. There is another feature of the picture which presents this truth in still clearer light. Christ appears accepting everything done to the needy as done to himself in person: "I was anhungered, and ye gave me meat. I was sick, and ye visited me." Then, when the righteous say, in amazement, "Why, we never saw thee hungry and fed thee, or found thee sick and ministered unto thee," he explains by saying "Ah!

you didn't know it, but every time you fed a hungry neighbor, or gave a cup of water to a thirsty pilgrim, or visited a sick man, or clothed an orphan-child, or wrought any ministry of kindness to one in need, you did it to me"—that is, the way he wants us to serve him is by serving those who need our ministry. The incense he loves best is that which is burned, not in a golden censer to waste its perfume on the air, but in the homes of need to cheer some human weariness or comfort some human sorrow.

The whole matter of practical consecration is ofttimes very unsatisfactory. We say that we give ourselves to Christ, making an unreserved consecration of all our gifts and powers to his service. We are not insincere, yet are we not conscious that in our actual living we utterly fail to make good our solemn covenants and honest intentions? It may help us take our consecration out of the region of the emotional and make it real to remember that it is a living sacrifice we are to make of ourselves to God—that is, it is not merely hymn-singing, praying and love-rapture he wants, but a living service in his name and for him in this blighted world.

The old monks used to hide away in deserts and

mountains and in monastery cells, as far as possible from human sin and need, and thought that the kind of service Christ wanted. Sometimes they would torture themselves, lacerate their bodies, fast, live in the cold and storms. Some of them dwelt for years on tops of pillars and monuments, exposed to rain and snow, to heat and tempest, and thought that they were offering most acceptable sacrifices to God.

But they were not. They were only wasting, in idle reverie, useless sacrifice, unavailing suffering and hideous self-torture, the glorious gifts which God had bestowed upon them to be used in serving others. Only the living sacrifice is pleasing. We bring our natural endowments, our acquired powers or gains, our gifts and blessings, to his feet; and, touching them with his benediction, he gives them back to us and says, "Take these again and use them for me in bearing joy, help, comfort, cheer or inspiration to those about you and in life's paths who need your ministries."

As we read still more deeply into the heart of this matter, we find that God bestows no gift, power or blessing upon us for ourselves alone. Take money. The mistake of the rich man in our Lord's parable was not that he was rich. He

made his wealth honestly. God gave it to him in abundant harvests. But his sin began when he asked, "What shall I do with all this wealth? Where shall I bestow all my fast-increasing goods?" His decision showed that he was living only for himself. He thought not of his relation to God above or to men about him. "I will build larger barns, and there bestow my goods." Instead of using his wealth to bless others, he would hoard it and keep it all in his own hands. The man who fulfills his mission and illustrates his consecration when money is given to him is he who says, "This is not mine. I have received it through God's blessing. He has greatly honored me in making me his agent to use it for him. It is a sacred trust, granted to be employed in his name for the blessing of men; I must do with it just what Christ himself would do if he were here in my place."

Or take knowledge. Culture, in a consecrated life, is not to be sought for its own sake, but that we may thereby be made capable of doing more for the good or the joy of others. Each new lesson in life, each new accession to our knowledge, each new experience, is legitimately employed only when it is turned at once into some channel of personal helpfulness. One has the gift of music,

and can sing or play well. The kind of consecration Christ wants of this gift is its use to do good to others, to make them happier or better, to put songs into silent hearts and joys into sad hearts. Of all gifts, there is no one, perhaps, capable of a diviner ministry than is the gift of song.

> "God sent his singers upon earth,
> With songs of sadness and of mirth,
> That they might touch the hearts of men,
> And bring them back to heaven again."

A young lady can read well. If she would carry out the spirit of her consecration to Christ, she is to employ her acquisition in giving happiness and profit to others. She can brighten many an evening hour in her own home by reading aloud to the loved ones that cluster around the hearth-stone. Or she can do still more Christly work by seeking out the aged with dim eyes, the poor who cannot read, or the sick in their lonely chambers, and quietly and tenderly reading to them words of comfort, instruction and divine love.

Take the blessings of spiritual experience. There is a wonderful sentence in one of Paul's letters. He is thanking God for the comfort which he had given to him in some sorrow, and he says, "Blessed be the God of all comfort, who

comforteth us in all our tribulation, *that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble*, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God"—that is, he praised God not merely because he had himself been comforted, but because the comfort which had been given to him in his sorrow gave him added power wherewith to comfort others.

It was a great thing to feel the warmth of God's love breaking into his heart, the light of his face streaming upon his soul, and his blessed peace stealing into his bosom. But his personal experience of joy in being thus comforted was entirely buried away in the gladness of the other thought, "Ah! now I can be a better preacher to the troubled. I can bring more consolation to the sorrowing. I have gotten a new power of helpfulness with which to serve my fellows. I can do more hereafter to wipe away tears and to put songs into the hearts of others." It was for this that he thanked God—not that the comfort of God had been imparted to him, although that was a great joy, but that he had something now which he never had before with which to do good and scatter benedictions. His greatest gladness was, not that God had lighted a new lamp in his soul

to pour its heavenly beams upon his own sorrow, although that was cause for deep praise, but that he had now a new lamp to carry into other darkened homes. What a sublimity of usefulness! Yet that is the true Christian way of receiving comfort and every spiritual gift and blessing. That is the true idea of consecration.

"When thou art converted," said the Master to Peter—"when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." His meaning was that a new power of personal helpfulness was to come to him through his sad experience which he should use in strengthening others to meet temptation. Then, when he had passed through that terrible night, when he had been lifted up again, when he had crept back to the feet of his risen Lord and had been forgiven and reinstated, he had double cause for gratitude—that he himself had been saved from hopeless wreck and restored, and, still more, that he was now a better man, prepared, in a higher sense than before, to be an apostle and a patient, helpful friend to others in similar trial.

Then take the still more wonderful experience of our Lord's own temptation. He certainly endured for his own sake that he might become Conqueror and Lord of all, that he might be "made

perfect through suffering," but that which the Scriptures love to linger upon as the chief reason why he was called to pass through temptation was that he might thereby be fitted, by his own experiences, to be to his people a sympathizing and helpful Friend and Saviour.

The meaning of all this is that we are to receive even our spiritual gifts and blessings not only as mere tokens of the love and kindness of God toward us, but also as new powers wherewith we are to serve our fellow-men. It is easy to be selfish even in the region of our most sacred spiritual life. We may want comfort only that we may be comforted ourselves. We may desire high attainments in Christian life for their own sake, with no wish to be made thereby greater blessings to the world. But when we seek in this way we may not receive. Even in spiritual things selfishness restrains the divine outflow toward us.

God does not like to bestow his blessings where they will be hoarded or absorbed. He loves to put his very best gifts into the hands of those who will not store them away in barns, or fold them up in napkins and hide them away, but will scatter them abroad. He puts songs into the hearts of those who will sing them out again. This is the secret

of that promise that to him that hath shall be given, and of that other little understood, little believed word of Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Heaven's benediction comes, not upon the receiving, but upon the dispensing. We are not blessed in the act of taking, but in the act of giving out again. Things we take to keep for ourselves alone fade in our hands. Men are good and great before God, not as they gather into their hands and hearts the abundant gifts of God, whether temporal or spiritual, but as their gathering augments their usefulness and makes them greater blessings to others.

XXXI.

BEAUTIFUL OLD AGE.

"Softly, oh softly, the years have swept by thee,
Touching thee lightly with tenderest care;
Sorrow and care did they often bring nigh thee,
Yet they have left thee but beauty to wear."

THIS may scarcely seem a fitting theme to introduce in a book meant chiefly for the young, and yet a moment's reflection will show its appropriateness and practicalness.

Old age is the harvest of all the years that have gone before. It is the barn into which all the sheaves are gathered. It is the sea into which all the rills and rivers of life flow from their springs in the hills and valleys of youth and manhood. We are each, in all our earlier years, building the house in which we shall have to live when we grow old. And we may make it a prison or a palace. We may make it very beautiful, adorning it with taste and filling it with objects which shall minister to our pleasure, comfort and power. We may

cover the walls with lovely pictures. We may spread luxurious couches of ease on which to rest. We may lay up in store great supplies of provision upon which to feed in the days of hunger and feebleness. We may gather and pile away large bundles of wood to keep the fires blazing brightly in the long winter days and nights of old age.

Or we may make our house very gloomy. We may hang the chamber-walls with horrid pictures, covering them with ghastly spectres which shall look down upon us and haunt us, filling our souls with terror when we sit in the gathering darkness of life's nightfall. We may make beds of thorns to rest upon. We may lay up nothing to feed upon in the hunger and craving of declining years. We may have no fuel ready for the winter fires.

We may plant roses to bloom about our doors and fragrant gardens to pour their perfumes about us, or we may sow weeds and briers to flaunt themselves in our faces as we sit in our doorways in the gloaming.

All old age is not beautiful. All old people are not happy. Some are very wretched, with hollow, sepulchral lives. Many an ancient palace was built over a dark dungeon. There were the marble walls that shone with dazzling splendor in the sunlight.

There were the wide gilded chambers with their magnificent frescoes and their splendid adornments, the gayety, the music and the revelry. But deep down beneath all this luxurious splendor and dazzling display was the dungeon filled with its unhappy victims, and up through the iron gratings came the sad groans and moanings of despair, echoing and reverberating through the gilded halls and ceiled chambers; and in this I see a picture of many an old age. It may have abundant comforts and much that tells of prosperity in an outward sense—wealth, honors, friends, the pomp and circumstance of greatness—but it is only a palace built over a gloomy dungeon of memory, up from whose deep and dark recesses come evermore voices of remorse and despair to sadden or embitter every hour and to cast shadows over every lovely picture and every bright scene.

It is possible so to live as to make old age very sad, and then it is possible so to live as to make it very beautiful. In going my rounds in the crowded city I came one day to a door where my ears were greeted with a great chorus of bird-songs. There were birds everywhere—in parlor, in dining-room, in bedchamber, in hall—and the whole house was filled with their joyful music. So may

old age be. So it is for those who have lived aright. It is full of music. Every memory is a little snatch of song. The sweet bird-notes of heavenly peace sing everywhere, and the last days of life are its happiest days—

> "Rich in experience that angels might covet,
> Rich in a faith that has grown with the years."

The important practical question is, How can we so live that our old age, when it comes, shall be beautiful and happy? It will not do to adjourn this question until the evening shadows are upon us. It will be too late then to consider it. Consciously or unconsciously, we are every day helping to settle the question whether our old age shall be sweet and peaceful or bitter and wretched. It is worth our while, then, to think a little how to make sure of a happy old age.

We must live a useful life. Nothing good ever comes out of idleness or out of selfishness. The standing water stagnates and breeds decay and death. It is the running stream that keeps pure and sweet. The fruit of an idle life is never joy and peace. Years lived selfishly never become garden-spots in the field of memory. Happiness comes out of self-denial for the good of others.

Sweet always are the memories of good deeds done and sacrifices made. Their incense, like heavenly perfume, comes floating up from the fields of toil and fills old age with holy fragrance. When one has lived to bless others, one has many grateful, loving friends whose affection proves a wondrous source of joy when the days of feebleness come. Bread cast upon the waters is found again after many days.

I see some people who do not seem to want to make friends. They are unsocial, unsympathetic, cold, distant, disobliging, selfish. Others, again, make no effort to retain their friends. They cast them away for the slightest cause. But they are robbing their later years of joys they cannot afford to lose. If we would walk in the warmth of friendship's beams in the late evening-time, we must seek to make to ourselves loyal and faithful friends in the busy hours that come before. This we can do by a ministry of kindness and self-forgetfulness. This was part at least of what our Lord meant in that counsel which falls so strangely on our ears until we understand it: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Again, we must live a pure and holy life. Every one carries in himself the sources of his own happiness or wretchedness. Circumstances have really very little to do with our inner experiences. It matters little in the determination of one's degree of enjoyment whether he live in a cottage or a palace. It is self, after all, that in largest measure gives the color to our skies and the tone to the music we hear. A happy heart sees rainbows and brilliance everywhere, even in darkest clouds, and hears sweet strains of song even amid the loudest wailings of the storm; and a sad heart, unhappy and discontented, sees spots in the sun, specks in the rarest fruits, and something with which to find fault in the most perfect of God's works, and hears discords and jarring notes in the heavenliest music. So it comes about that this whole question must be settled from within. The fountains rise in the heart itself. The old man, like the snail, carries his house on his back. He may change neighbors or homes or scenes or companions, but he cannot get away from himself and his own past. Sinful years put thorns in the pillow on which the head of old age rests. Lives of passion and evil store away bitter fountains from which the old man has to drink.

Sin may seem pleasant to us now, but we must not forget how it will appear when we get past it and turn to look back upon it; especially must we keep in mind how it will seem from a dying pillow. Nothing brings such pure peace and quiet joy at the close as a well-lived past. We are every day laying up the food on which we must feed in the closing years. We are hanging up pictures about the walls of our hearts that we shall have to look at when we sit in the shadows. How important that we live pure and holy lives! Even forgiven sins will mar the peace of old age, for the ugly scars will remain.

Summing all up in one word, only Christ can make any life, young or old, truly beautiful or truly happy. Only he can cure the heart's restless fever and give quietness and calmness. Only he can purify that sinful fountain within us, our corrupt nature, and make us holy. To have a peaceful and blessed ending to life, we must live it with Christ. Such a life grows brighter even to its close. Its last days are the sunniest and the sweetest. The more earth's joys fail, the nearer and the more satisfying do the comforts become. The nests over which the wing of God droops, which in the bright summer days of prosperous strength lay hidden

among the leaves, stand out uncovered in the days of decay and feebleness when winter has stripped the branches bare. And for such a life death has no terrors. The tokens of its approach are but "the land-birds lighting on the shrouds, telling the weary mariner that he is nearing the haven." The end is but the touching of the weatherbeaten keel on the shore of glory.

XXXII.

UNCONSCIOUS FAREWELLS.

"I have often said 'Good-bye' lightly, with plans for the future, to people whom I have next seen or heard of as dead."

PRIVATE LETTER.

EVERY hour there are partings, thought to be only for a little season, which prove to be for ever. One morning a young man bade his wife and child good-bye and went out to his work. There was an accident on the street, and before midday his lifeless body was borne back to his home. It was a terrible shock, but there was one sweet comfort that came with wondrous power to the crushed heart of the young wife. The last hour they had spent together had been one of peculiar tenderness. Not a word had been spoken by either that she could wish had not been spoken. She had not dreamed at the time that it would be their last conversation, and yet there was nothing in it that left one painful recollection now that she should

meet her husband no more. Through all these years of loneliness and widowhood the memory of that last parting has been an abiding joy in her life, like a fragrant perfume or a bright lamp of holy peace.

Life is very critical. Any word may be our last. Any farewell, even amid glee and merriment, may be for ever. If this truth were but burned into our consciousness, if it ruled as a deep conviction and real power in our lives, would it not give a new meaning to all our human relationships? Would it not make us far more tender than we sometimes are? Would it not oftentimes put a rein upon our rash and impetuous speech? Would we carry in our hearts the miserable suspicions and jealousies that now so often embitter the fountains of our loves? Would we be so impatient of the faults of others? Would we allow trivial misunderstandings to build up strong walls between us and those whom we ought to hold very close to us? Would we keep alive petty quarrels year after year which a manly word any day would compose? Would we pass neighbors or old friends on the street without recognition because of some real or fancied slight, some wounding of pride or some supposed injury? Or would we be so chary of our

kind words, our commendations, our sympathy, our words of comfort, when weary hearts all about us are breaking for just such expressions of interest or appreciation or helpfulness as we have it in our power to give?

We all know how kindly it makes us feel toward any one to sit beside his death-bed. We are spending our last hour with him. We would not utter a harsh word or cherish a single grudge against him for the world. There will never be an opportunity to recall any word spoken now, or to obliterate any painful impression made. We can never again give joy to this heart that is so soon to stop its beatings. What a softening influence this thought has! All our coldness melts down before the eyes that have death's far-away look in them. All the long-frozen kindly sentiment in our hearts toward our friend is thawed out as we hold our last intercourse with him.

Then we all know, too, how slumbering love awakes and cold spirits warm and all the chill of selfishness dissolves beside the coffin of one who is dead. Every one feels kindly then. Not a trace of grudging or bitterness lingers in any heart. Slights and wrongs are forgiven and forgotten. Icy winter changes to mellow summer. Loving

words of gratitude or appreciation flow from every tongue. Praise and commendation never spoken when the weary spirit needed them so much find free expression when the heavy ear can hear them no more. Men feel themselves awed in the presence of eternity, and heartily ashamed of their wretched spites and petty animosities and cold, mechanical friendship.

Now, how it would bless and beautify our lives if we could carry that same thoughtful, grateful, patient, forgiving, loving spirit into our every-day intercourse with each other; if we could treat men with the same gentle consideration, with the same frank, manly sincerity, as when we sit by their death-bed; if we could bring the *post-mortem* appreciation, gratitude, charity and unselfish kindliness back into the vexed and overburdened years of actual, toilsome life!

It would be impossible to live otherwise if we but realized that any hour's intercourse with another might indeed be the last. If a man truly felt that he might be spending his last day with his family, taking his last meal with them, enjoying the last evening with them, would not his heart be cleansed of all harshness, bitterness and selfishness? Would not his feelings, his very

tones, be charged with almost a divine tenderness? If a mother felt that to-day might be the last that she would have her child with her, would she be so impatient of its endless questions, so easily annoyed by its restless activities, so fretted and vexed by its faults and thoughtless ways?

Would we be so exacting, so calculating, so cold and formal, so undemonstrative, so selfish, in our intercourse with our friends, if we truly felt that to-day's sunset might be the last we should behold or that we should never meet our friends again? Would not the realization of this ever-imminent possibility act as a mighty restraint on all that is harsh or unloving in us, and as a powerful inspiration to bring out all that is kindly and tender? The poet's words are well worth heeding:

"If thou dost bid thy friend farewell,
But for one night though that farewell may be,
Press thou his hand in thine.
How canst thou tell how far from thee
Fate or caprice may lead his steps ere that to-morrow comes?
Men have been known lightly to turn the corner of a street,
And days have grown to months,
And months to lagging years, ere they
Have looked in loving eyes again. . . .
Yea, find thou always time to say some earnest word
Between the idle talk, lest with thee henceforth,
Night and day, regret should walk."

With many a lonely heart regret does indeed walk night and day because of the memory of unkind words spoken which can never be unspoken, since the ears that heard them are deaf to every sound of earth. Friends have separated with sharp words or in momentary estrangement through some trivial difference, and have never met again. Death has come suddenly to one of them or life has set their feet in paths divergent from that moment. Many a bitter and unavailing tear—bitter because unavailing—is shed over the grave of a departed one by one who would give worlds for a single moment in which to beg forgiveness or seek to make reparation.

So uncertain is life and so manifold are the vicissitudes of human experience that any leave-taking may be for ever. We are never sure of an opportunity to unsay the angry word or draw out the thorn we left rankling in another's heart. The kindness which we felt prompted to do to-day, but neglected or deferred, we may never be able to perform. The only way, therefore, to save ourselves from unavailing sorrow and regret is to let love always rule in our hearts and control our speech. If we should in a thoughtless moment speak unadvisedly, giving pain to another heart,

let reparation be made upon the spot. The sun should never go down upon our wrath. We should never leave anything over-night that we would not be willing to leave finally and for ever just in that shape, and which we would blush to meet again in the great disclosure.

Life's actions do not appear to us in the same colors when viewed in the noontide glare and in the evening's twilight. Little things in our treatment of others, which at the time, under the cross-lights of emulation and rivalry or in the excitement of business and social life, do not seem wrong, when seen from the shadows of final separation or great grief, fill us with shame and regret. This after-view is by far the truest. After-thoughts are the wiser thoughts. We get the most faithful representation of life in retrospect. The things we regret in such an hour are things we ought not to have done. The things we wish then we had done are things we ought to have done. There could be no better test of life's actions than the question, "How will this appear when I look back upon it from the end? Will it give me pleasure or pain?"

We all want to have beautiful endings to our lives. We want to leave sweet memories behind

in the hearts of those who know and love us. We want our names to be fragrant in the homes on whose thresholds our footfalls are wont to be heard. We want the memory of our last parting with our friends to live as a tender joy with them as the days pass away. We want, if we should stand by a friend's coffin to-morrow, to have the consciousness that we have done nothing to embitter his life, to add to his burdens or to tarnish his soul, and that we have left nothing undone which it lay in our power to do to help him or to minister to him comfort or cheer. We can make sure of this only by so living always that any day would make a tender and beautiful last day; that any hand-grasp would be a fitting farewell; that any hour's intercourse with friend or neighbor would leave a fragrant memory; and that no treatment of another would leave a regret or cause a pang if death or space should divide us for ever.

For after any heart-throb, any sentence, any good-bye, God may write

FINIS.

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